

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What Is Faith?

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-3

Code: 1626

Take your Bibles if you will please and turn to Hebrews chapter 11, and we want to begin this most marvelous chapter with the consideration of the first three verses.

This chapter has been called the hall of fame, the chapter of the heroes of faith, the honor roll of the Old Testament saints, the Westminster Abbey of Scripture, the faith chapter and it goes on and on, all different kinds of names and titles have been given to this most wonderful chapter.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews deals with the excellency of faith, the excellency of faith. The subject then is faith. Now as always in the mind of the Spirit of God, Scripture fits into the context, and here it's no different. This 11th chapter fits most perfectly into the flow of the epistle to the Hebrews. In the first ten chapters of the Book of Hebrews the writer has been laboring to prove one major point, and that one major point is this, the New Testament or the new covenant in Jesus' blood is in every way superior to the old covenant. That is the theme of ten chapters, Christ is a better priest with a better sacrifice by which He sealed a better covenant. And the whole theme of the ten chapters is to prove Christ better than everything connected with the old covenant, and he's writing to Jews to prove to them that the new covenant is the best. He says Christ is better than angels, prophets, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, He's better than everything and anything connected to the old covenant. And periodically through those ten chapters, four times already he has warned the Jews who know this to respond to the new covenant while their hearts are still sensitive. Because within the community of Hebrews to which he wrote there were some intellectually convinced Jews who knew this was true but never had received Christ. And so four times already he has warned them to come to Christ, not to turn around and go back to Judaism and thus become apostates, or those who fall away from the truth and are lost forever. He tells them, appropriate the new covenant, appropriate the new covenant. And the 10th chapter closes with a warning to appropriate the new covenant, to make the new covenant yours, to step away from Judaism and the temple and the priesthood and all that and come to the new covenant.

,Now this brings up this question, how? How do I come to the new covenant? What do I do? The Jew was so used to a works system, and this was a whole grace system, works weren't even involved, how then was he to come to the new covenant? I mean there weren't any sacrifices to make, there, there weren't any particular feasts to observe, there weren't any ritual washings to go through, there wasn't any ceremony, there was no circumcision, there wasn't any memorization of, of ethics, the law. How then does a man oriented to a works system come to the new covenant which is of grace?

That's the question. And the first century Jews saw everything as a matter of works. And even after the writer has shown them this new covenant it would have been very easy for them to attempt to merit it or to earn it. Do you know there are people who do that today? Still working very hard to earn salvation under the new covenant? And they were ... this would have been their natural response. The only method the Jews knew was works. A simple study of the Gospels for example re ... realize ... makes us realize that the Judaism of the first century was not the supernatural system that had been given by God in the beginning, it was a system that had been twisted into a works system. They had added all kinds of legalistic things to the real system that God gave which was a faith system. They had come up with the Judaism of the first century which was a works, righteousness, self-glorification process. In fact if you want to know the truth, and here's a good definition of Judaism in the time of Christ and afterwards, it was nothing but a religious cult built on ethics. It, it had lost its concept of faith in God, it was a system of ethics, it was a religious cult of an ethical nature, it taught salvation by works.

Now such a works system is despised by God. God does not redeem men by works, He didn't do it in the Old Testament, "Abraham believed God- and it was counted to him for righteousness." Works was only a by-product. God has always redeemed men by faith, and nothing is more offensive to God than people trying to earn their way to heaven. When Jesus died on the cross the last words He said, tetelestai, it is (what?) finished, there's nothing to do. No man by his own self--imposed code of ethics ever pleases God. In Ephesians chapter 2, you remember the passage it's, it's obvious to us, "For by grace are you saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." No man is ever redeemed by works, no matter how good you are. In Romans chapter 3, listen to this, verse 20, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." The only thing the law does for you it says is "give you the knowledge of sin. Righteousness comes apart from the law through Jesus Christ." Verses 21 and 22. Verse 27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." "A man is justified by faith," verse 28, "apart from the deeds of the law." God never justified a man on the basis of his works. Verse 2 of chapter 4 says, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath something of which to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Salvation has always been in God's economy by faith, not by works. Works always follow legitimate faith. James said, "Faith without works is (what?) dead." Works are a by-product of true faith. And so we find that God does not tolerate a self-imposed ethical system as a means to reaching Him.

Now if you can't count on your works how are you going to reach God? It's simple, it's by faith, and that's exactly what he introduces in verse 38 of chapter 10. Having established the necessity and the superiority of the new covenant he says, here's how to get in on it. And what does he do, beautifully, he quotes from the Book of Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4, so he quotes their own Testament. Verse 38, "Now the just shall live (what?) by faith." He establishes therefore the principle of apprehension of the new covenant, it is by believing it, simply believing it. Faith is the key not works. "The just shall live by faith;" but here comes the warning, "if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in

him. We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that (do what?) believe to the saving of the soul." Salvation is a matter of faith or belief, those two words mean the same thing. Salvation is always by faith, now we are aware of this.

Now if salvation is by faith it's important that they understand what faith is. Do you realize that they were so messed up in works that it was hard for them to even understand faith. And their first argument would have been, wait a minute why all of our forefathers used to operate on works, they did the sacrifices, they did the wash-ings, they carried out the ceremonies, they observed the Sabbaticals, they, they went through all of the processes that were Judaism, they- got it right down to the nitty-gritty of the law and they were obedient etc, etc. And so in chapter 11 he just lists all the heroes of the history of Israel and starts out everyone of them by saying this, "By faith." By faith so and so did this, by faith so and so did that, by faith ... and he goes right down the line, Abraham, Sarah, Noah, right on down, Moses, Joshua, Jacob, all of them lived by faith. And you see what he's saying to them is this, the only way to apprehend the new covenant is by faith, but don't get shocked about that, that's nothing new that's the way you apprehended God in the old covenant too. And so it's important then that he expand on this idea of faith because they're so locked into a works system that they can't see the legitimacy of faith or the definition of it either for that matter. And they certainly wouldn't relate it to the old covenant since they were so locked up in the concept that the old covenant was a matter of works, so he wants to expose them to the fact that God has always operated on the basis of faith.

Now to begin with let's look at the nature of faith, then we'll see the testimony of faith, then we'll see the first illustration of faith. The nature of faith is in verse 1, it says this, "Now faith," here he's going to define it for them so they will understand what this means, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Now there are two aspects of faith there that are so closely wed that it's almost impossible to divide them. Those phrases are almost identical. "The substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen." Now that is not in the purest sense really a definition of faith, it is more a sharing of some of the characteristics of faith. It, it's more of just a view of what faith is like rather than an explicit theological definition. Now the word faith is a simple word in the Greek, the word means belief, trust, confidence, faith. And he says ... now let's look at it, this is really simply but, oh it's exciting, he says faith first of all is the substance of things hoped for. That's the first thing he says about the nature of faith. It is the substance of things hoped for. You say, but things hoped for don't have any substance. They're just hoped for. But faith makes them real, now watch that, watch that. The matters of belief are hoped for, what we believe in is what we hope for and yet faith gives them a present substance.

As this chapter shows in Old Testament times there were many men and women who had nothing of the promises of God ... nothing but the promises of God to rest on. God said, there's coming a Messiah, there's coming one who will finally take away sin. God said, there's coming a day when Israel shall have its own kingdom, when Messiah shall reign, and when the land shall be restored to

Israel. God said through Ezekiel ah, "That I will sprinkle clean water upon you and make you clean. I'll take away the stony heart of flesh. I'll put within you a heart of flesh. I'll give you my spirit." God said, "I'll gather you in the land, you'll have peace and safety." God promised all of that and they never saw any of that. But they hoped for it, and it is said that every Jewish mother longed to be the mother of Messiah. They hoped for that. They hoped for the restoration of Jerusalem when Jerusalem was sacked. And now they're hoping for greater freedom and liberty in Israel when Israel is being bombarded by all of the outside pressure of the Arab world, they're still living in hope. Now that is what faith is, faith is living in a hope that is so real it gives substance to the hope in the present tense. The promises that came to the Old Testament people were so real that even though they never saw them they based their life on them, sight unseen. All of the Old Testament promises related to the future, but those people acted as if they were in the present tense. They simply took God at His word and lived on the basis of that. They were people of faith and faith gave substance to what was yet in the future.

Now we say then that faith is not sort of a wistful, longing, hoping that something's going to come to pass in a nebulous tomorrow, faith is an absolute utter certainty. And it's an interesting thing because you see it defies everything that is normal. For example, Christian hope, that, that which we hope for is belief in God against the world. If we follow the world's standards, the world's things, which are readily visible to us we can get some measure of comfort, some measure of prosperity. If we follow the standards of the unseen God, a God we've never seen, a God whose audible voice we've never heard, a Christ whose face we've never seen, a Christ whose form we've never touched, but if we follow Him we may have pain, we may have loss, we may have discomfort, we may have unpopularity, we may get persecuted and we may lose our lives, but we do it anyway because that for which we hope is given substance in the present tense because of the intensity of our faith. It is faith you see that says it's better to suffer with God now, knowing what shall be than to prosper with the world now. Faith then is faith against the system, against the world. In chapter 11 verse 6 er, verse 26 I mean, it says, that Moses, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." You see Moses even then took a stand on Messianic hope, and forsook all the treasures of Egypt to be persecuted for a Messiah that wasn't going to come for several thousand years. Now that's a very unusual kind of hope. You say, well Moses was sure - wistfully longing, wasn't he? No, his hope was certain because you see he had such a positive hope in the future that it gave him an, an absolute substance in the presence ... in the present, he really believed and so there was a sense in which he actually understood in the present tense the reality of Messiah.

In the Book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are ah, confronted with the choice of obeying Nebuchadnezzar. Now he's alive, and he's powerful and he's tangible. Or they could obey God who is invisible and whom they've never seen. Now if they don't obey the king they get thrown in the fire. Now the empiricist ... the empiricist says, ah it's no contest, I buy what I see, I'll bow down to the king and forget the fire. The man of God who has faith says, I'll obey God though I can't see Him and take the fire. So you see it's faith against the system, it's believing in God against the world,

against what is tangible, against what is obvious. Take it a step further it's, it's, it's rejecting our senses for the sake of our hope. The average man says, take what you want, take what you can taste and touch and smell, grab whatever you can grab that meets the need of your senses. And the Bible says, don't believe your senses, believe God, who can only be touched by faith.

Long ago Epicurus who was responsible for the group of people known as the Epicureans said that the chief end of life is pleasure, that man only exists for pleasure. But he didn't mean what many people think, many people have ah, made him into a hedonist which he really was not. But he insisted that men take the long view. He said what we need to do is find out the thing which is most pleasant ultimately, not most pleasant momentarily because the one that is pleasant momentarily may bring the most pain ultimately. So Epicurus was right, he said, live for ultimate pleasure. Now the Christian is not a masochist quite the contrary, he's living for ultimate pleasure. I would rather suffer a little bit in this world and be glorified forever in the next, right? Plus it's not really such tough suffering anyway because it's in the presence of the Lord who's never apart from me. And that again is in 11:25, characteristic of Moses, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." You see this kind of hope in the future that gives practical substance in the present means, I go against the world, against my senses and against the present to lay all of my eggs in the basket of the future. But it's not a wistful longing, it's a certainty isn't it? We're not standing around in fear and trepidation saying, I hope this thing pans out. We know it will. That's faith.

Now you all have enjoyed things by faith. Well sure, you, you've had, you've had future things that you're hoping for that you enjoy in the present. Have you ever just enjoyed your vacation sometime in January when it wasn't until August, have you ever done that? You see yourself laying on that thing in the middle of the pool, soaking in that sun, or you see yourself up on that river in Colorado and you're throwing out that fly rod and you catch that 12 foot trout, do you see that? Do ya? You've all done it, we've all done that. When I was a little kid Christmas was more fun by faith than it was in actuality. We've all done ... we've all taken ... I took a trip to Israel by faith, long before I ever went there. I used to walk those hills all the time I was studying the Bible, did you know that? And I had never been there. Some of you anticipating a baby in your family? Have, have you by faith already enjoyed that baby? Has the thing hoped for become a present substance? Sure, of course. Some of you are ah, planning on moving into a new home, you're not quite there yet but in ... by faith you see everything arranged the way you want it, you see people coming in the door and saying, oh hello, what a lovely place you have, hum, you know, where's the food? You know ... and, right? Ha, ha. And by faith you're already enjoying in a present substance what is a future reality, do you understand? Now that's exactly what the writer of Hebrews is saying, faith is simply making a present substance out of a future reality. Do you know something? I've never been to heaven but I can't tell you how many hours I've spent walking the golden streets. I've been up and down that place, by faith. I've peeked through every possible prism in the walls of heaven. I've, I've spotted out all of those jewels that stud the city of heaven. I've gone by the gate of pearl and, and all the different ...

there's many gates made out a pearl a piece, I've checked them all out. I've even sat on a cloud and played my harp, by faith. And I've flown all over the universe, by faith. You see that's a future reality but it has present substance by faith, do you understand? I believe it so strongly it's real to me. Remember Pavlov's dogs? When they... when he rang the bell they all began to salivate, because for a long time they'd rang ... they'd ring the bell and feed them immediately. And then all of a sudden they'd ring the bell and without feeding them they'd begin to salivate, by faith. The food's coming guys. You see faith is that ability to take what is in the future and give it present substance. And that's why the Bible says that we are seated in the heavenlies. I have already been in the kingdom too, and I've seen Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem, David's throne, and I've served Him there and I've served Him in heaven by faith. That's faith, it takes a future reality and gives it present substance. That's a gorgeous kind of commodity too, and boy there are some days when you couldn't live without it, right? That's faith. Faith then gives present substance to future hope.

Now the word substance is an interesting word, hypostasis, it ah, only appears two other times in Hebrews. Once it is used in chapter 1 verse 3 to speak of Christ as the very essence of the Father, the express image, substance or essence. Another time in chapter 3 verse 14 it speaks of a guarantee of assurance or a title deed. And, and that's exactly what substance is, it's, it's essence and it's assurance, that's how the word is used. Faith then provides the firm ground on which I stand waiting for the assurance of the fulfillment of the essence of God's promise. Faith believes God, banks on it, it's assurance that that which is promised has essence, content, reality. Romans 8:24, "For we are saved by hope." Watch, we're saved by hope, we, we know our salvation now only because we believe it to be true in the future, that is in terms of our glor ... the glorification end of salvation, going to be with the Lord. But what hope? "But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope (that) for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." If you really believe that the future that God's promised is for real then you'll patiently wait for it, you don't get upset, you don't get rattled, you don't get worried, you just wait for it, that's faith in a future reality, and it gives to it a present substance. Look at verse 13 of the same chapter, chapter 11, it talks about the time of Abraham and Sarah, it says this, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them (what?) afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." You say, but they never saw heaven. Ohh, they saw heaven with the eye of faith, and they grabbed it and they embraced it, and said, hey we don't even belong here we're, we're just pilgrims we're going to a city whose Builder and Maker is God. That's faith, giving present reality, something to, to hold onto right now that is really in the future. The substance of things hoped for. So faith gives us a future object and a security, an assurance that holds us fast.

Secondly he says that faith is "the evidence of things not seen." Now as I say this is very closely akin to the first statement but let me see if I can maybe give it a little different twist of meaning. The word evidence is elencnos..which ah, elenchos which means ah, conviction, would be the best word I think. Faith is the conviction that the unseen exists. That's what he's saying. Now this takes a little bit

further step in my mind than the first phrase, because this implies action. This is banking your life on your hope. Faith is living on the basis of things not seen. You know when Thomas touched our Lord or saw our Lord, He said to him, "Thomas, you have seen, and you have believed; blessed is he that hath not seen, (what?) yet believed." That's true faith. Faith then in the first phrase of verse 1 actualizes a future truth, in the second phrase it commits a life to it. It is the conviction of things not seen.

Let me show you the two sides of ... if I can illustrate this. Noah for example believed God. God said, Noah, it's going to rain. Which didn't mean one thing to Noah because rain didn't exist. That would be like God saying to you it's going to gleep. You'd say ah, run that by me again. It wouldn't make a bit of sense because it didn't have any meaning. Noah, it's going to rain, water dropping out of the sky. Now Noah believed that, it had substance in his brain. That thing for which God had made promise became a reality because he believed it. That's the first step. And I imagine that he sat around a lot just thinking in his mind, water out of heaven, hum, hum, hum, hum, I wonder how that'll work? I imagine he gave substance to the future thing, he gave it a present reality just by thinking about what rain would be like. It was the substance of things hoped for in his mind. But he didn't stop there, he built a boat. Now that's the conviction that takes it a step further. You see it was one thing to dream about what that rain might be like, it was something else to establish his life on it and for the better part of a hundred and twenty years build a ship in the desert. While everybody said, Mo ... Mo ... ah, Noah has gone bananas, he's over there building a ship in the middle of the desert, and then he says it's okay because it'll float, water will fall out of heaven and make it float. Now you see it's one thing to visualize a future reality and give it present substance, it's something else for a hundred and twenty years to build a boat in the desert. And faith is to begin with to believe it and then to bank your life on it. And boy I know, if I know anything about human nature that there were a lot of times during that better part of a hundred and twenty years that he said to himself, Noah, Noah, what are you doing? But he not only believed it he acted on it. And that's what we're going to see all through the 11th chapter, to believe and then to act, to believe something and to move out on it.

Now we believe a lot of things. And I trust that we believe God to the point where we bank our life on it. But you know to the unbelieving world, to be able to bank your life on some invisible, spiritual future thing looks like the most preposterous thing imaginable. And people are always saying, oh you Christians, pie in the sky and the sweet by and by and all this, you know. You guys are out there believing all that stuff you can't even verify. That's right, and we go around saying, this world is not my home I'm just a passing through my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. And they say, you ... you don't even have your feet on the ground, what kind of a weird thing is that? What a way to live life. And the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:6, "And he has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And he says in chapter 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies." And we're just moving around in another domain, you see, by faith and the world thinks that something's wrong with our heads. And we worship Him who is invisible, and we bank our lives

on it. Now that's faith. But you see that's ... watch this, that's faith with spiritual content or that's faith placed in an unseen thing, that really has no visible verification. Now the natural man cannot comprehend that kind of spiritual faith. We see Him who is invisible but the unsaved man does not because he has no organ of perception.

There is a sense in which all men, as I've told you many times live by a natural kind of faith, for example they drink water coming out of the pipes in their house without knowing anything about what's in it. You say, well then that is faith, isn't it? Well sure it is, you see there's no way to know what's in that pipe. You say, oh but I don't do that, I have a home handy dandy chemistry kit, and every drop of water goes right into my chemistry kit for analysis, before I ever drink it. That's okay, you've put your faith in your handy dandy chemistry kit. Everybody lives on the principle of natural faith. You eat food that comes in cans, that has labels that you actually believe in. Money, is, is totally a faith principle, do you know that all that paper isn't worth anywhere near what it's supposed to be? And especially today. But you know in 1929 the people who survived the economic crash known as the depression knew that it wasn't a loss of cash that brought the depression it was the loss of faith in cash, people stopped believing in money. It's only a faith commodity.

A scientist goes into a laboratory and he exercises natural faith. It says on a little thing you can mix this with this and it won't blow up and so he does it, that's faith. You go to the doctor and the doctor says, you've got a problem, we must slice you open, a foot across and we must take out your whatever and fix this and bend this around and do it. You say, okay doctor. You don't even know what he's talking about. And you go in there and somebody says, well see you in a few hours and they stick that little deal whoomp, and you're out and there's a whole bunch of people in there just opening you up and just playing around in there and doing any-thing they want to do. And you're laying on that little table oblivious. My friend that's faith. That ... it...you ... everybody operates on a principle of natural faith. We drive places and we actually believe the signs. But you see even though men have natural faith they don't have the ability to perceive God because that's a spiritual kind of faith. And that's a supernatural gift from God, that kind of faith. "By grace are you saved through faith; and faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift of (what? of) God." Spiritual faith is a gift of God, natural faith comes with being born. In fact spiritual faith accord-ing to Romans 10:17, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by a speech about Jesus Christ. That's a gift from God. If a man hears with a willing heart, prepared by the Holy Spirit, God grants him the faith to respond. That's a gift from God. In First Corinthians 1 it says in verse 21, "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wis-dom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It's the preaching of the cross that brings faith, when it reaches a fertile soil in the heart of a man. And so faith in a natural sense is one thing, faith in a spiritual sense is something else. So to begin with then he tells us the nature of faith, it is to be able to actualize something in the future and then to be able to bank your life on it. The unbelieving man has this in a physical sense but he has no capacity for it in a spiritual sense. We who know Jesus Christ do.

Then he moves secondly to the testimony of faith, hurrying on because we're going to cover so much about faith in this chapter we'll just skip some thoughts. The testimony of faith, verse 2, "For by it," that goes back to the word faith, "by it the elders received witness." Now the elders there refers to Old Testament saints, the fathers of Israel, the greats that he names in this particular chapter.

Now the word to receive witness has to do with ah, receiving praise or approval. They were praised or they were approved. What it means is they lived by faith and therefore God approved of them. God approves those who operate on faith, and I think there's a sense in which every man who lives by spiritual faith in God has within his own heart the knowledge of the approval of God, don't you have that? Don't you sense a certain kind of peace and a certain kind of ah, having arrived at reality when you've trusted God? I think we sense His approval. And he goes all through the chapter, Abel believed God regarding sacrifice, did it by faith and God approved of his sacrifice, didn't He? Enoch believed God that he wouldn't die and he didn't, God was pleased and God approved. Noah believed God that it would rain and he inherited righteousness for believing God, God approved. Abraham and Sarah believed God for a child and God approved of their faith and they received a child. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Amram, Jochebed, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel all those listed in chapter 11, all believed God and God said, it's good, I approve. They trusted in what they couldn't see, watch it, they bet their life on it and God said, that's good, I approve. The Bible says without faith it is impossible to do what? To please God. Without faith you can't please Him. I don't care what you do, without faith you can't please God. But if you have faith He is pleased. He approves. The man who tries to live in this world without faith lives the kind of bleak, black, hopeless existence that runs him into a wall of destiny that doesn't have any answers. Can you imagine not believing in anything? Can you imagine trying to blind yourself so that you never thought about what happens after you die? Can you imagine that? Can you imagine living in a world that is so black you don't have any hope in anything and you just realize that you're just a great nothing in the midst of a universe that is some kind of stupid thing, it has no meaning. Especially in a world that's rejected God altogether. if there's no God outside this little pea size world floating around in the midst of a infinite universe, if there's no God, if existence has no meaning and no point and no purpose then we're trapped in the most stupid joke there ever was.

You know modern man has put himself in a dilemma. This has been outlined for us today by men like Francis Schaeffer and other men who've been writing books on this subject, the dilemma of man. And it's a most interesting thing, let me just give you a little bit of insight and I'm going to give you a little bit of a philosophy lecture for a minute if I can, use the overhead to help you understand what happens to a man who doesn't have faith in God. For many, many years man had what scientists call a unified field of knowledge that is man understood God or understood, what shall we say? God, history, science, everything within one frame of reference, didn't need to make a, a difference, everything was existing within the frame of reality. But then we had a great movement in philosophy known as German Rationalism, and the rationalists came along and said, guys, you know what we've

got to do? We've got to get rid of all this God stuff. And so the rationalists began to attack religion and there were men like Graff, Wellhausen, Bauer, Strauss, Renan who was a French atheist, and these men began to attack all supernatural things. And their first attack since they were in Europe was the Bible, and so they just wiped out the Bible. And some of them came up ... one guy came up with 26 verses that were inspired, 26 verses that had meaning, all the rest was just you know, gobble, everything that had any kind of taint of miracle in it was wiped out. So rationalism reduced man to one level of existence, and we'll call this the level of reason. And man existed only on the lev - ...okay it's fading a little bit but we'll try it again. The level of reason, he existed no where else. Now this was very difficult for man to handle, because this meant that man lived in a world that was purely rational and purely logical, and man was nothing but a machine. He was only, only the rational if it wasn't rational you couldn't believe it, anything miraculous, forget it. This is only to be rational, empirical, what I see I believe, there's nothing outside of my brain. And you know what happened? Man begin to scratch his head and say good that's ... that is terrible, I can't believe that. That crucifies half of my nature. Man, my soul longs for something out there, I must believe in something. I can't just run around in a little box thinking I'm a machine and I don't have any ultimate meaning. And so men like Kierkegaard came along and he split the field of knowledge and on the top he put faith, and everybody went wheew, feel better now, something to believe in. But you know what he put up here? Ha, ha, can't see it aw, he put up here faith, no content. It doesn't mean ... there's, there's nothing to believe in, you could believe in anything, just believe in believing. Believe in anybody you want from Paul Tillich's Ho...Holy Other to Mr. Clean and anything in between, doesn't matter just believe in believing, get a grip on something and, and then philosophers called it the leap of faith. They were trying to live in the world of reason and they couldn't do it and so they said, we've got to leap and so they jumped up into the world of faith and believed in anything. And one of the secrets of philosophy is you never have to tell anybody what you leaped onto to, shh, that's my leap. It's not communicated, this is existential contentlessness, non-rational and illogical. Now you say, well how can a man live in a tension like that? How can a man say, I only believe in what's reasonable except when I leap into what's irrational.

But that's what man has done today. And so what happens is for a long time man lived in a rational world and German rationalism, everything was in a box and everything was very real and then men started to jump, and boy when they started jumping everything went. The first thing to go, up here in the ... what Schaeffer calls the upper story was philosophy, and all kinds of screwball philosophies came along. Immediately after philosophy came art, and it used to be that art was reasonable, when a guy painted a picture of a cow it looked like a cow. When a guy painted a picture of a house it looked like a house, when a ... somebody painted a picture of a lady it looked like a lady. Then all of a sudden you have van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso and abstract and you've got stuff that looks like nothing anybody ever saw. And you have modern art which is nothing but man's leap. And if you go up to an artist and say, what does it mean? You have insulted that guy, leave him alone, it's his leap. And after art went music, and music took a leap and you have Debussy and Cage and The Beatles, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Band and all this weird stuff, and John Cage's music sounds like

somebody opened Fibber McGee's closet. And you know of all the screwball stuff ... and it doesn't have to have any rhyme or reason or any sense to it. And then you have culture, culture leaped upstairs too to maintain its existence and people began to write and people like ah, Dylan Thomas, people like Arthur Miller who write things that just smash everything, just smash every mores, every mor ... morality, every code of ethics, everything, just smash love, smash honesty, smash what is right, just wipe out everything, just jump up there in an amoral, illogical, contentless kind of noth-ing. No truth, no morality, just despair, the last thing that went was theology. Somebody bounced along and said, guess what? God died. Remember that? And everything went up there in the upper story, a contentless leap into nothingness. And you know what? You know what I call this whole thing up here? The absurd. You can't do that. And - it's best illustrated I think by a ... I, I read a movie review in the Times and it was a review of the film Catch 22 and I've used this illustration with many student groups, but the film Catch 2 is a ... Catch 22 is about an island in the Mediterranean and the island's name is Pianosa and on it is a, is a squadron of fliers who are flying missions over Southern Europe ah, during the war, Americans, and there was one ah, man on the island ah, Yosarian by name who was one of the fliers and he hated it, just absolutely despised it, he could have cared less about patriotism or anything, just wanted to save his hide, and these missions were dangerous. Now the only way you could ever get out of this deal was after 25 missions. Well then they got a new colonel and when the guy hit 25 he raised it to 30, Colonel Kauthgaarde raised it to 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65 and, and you know ad infinitum, there wasn't anyway out. Only one thing to get out, that was if you were insane. And that was the catch, if you were insane you could get out, but you had to turn yourself in for being insane. And only insane people would fly those missions, so if you turned yourself in for being insane to get out of it you wouldn't be insane, right? So there was no way out. There was no way out. So finally Yosarian comes to the end of his rope and he does the only thing he can do, and he says, I'm going to build a raft and float to Sweden. You say, you can't do that the currents go the other way, don't bother with me it's my leap, leave me alone. You say, what's he doing? When all of the rational boxes have closed up he does what's absurd. You know why people take drugs today? They've run out of rational options, and it's a leap to find some kind of escape from a smashing world of reason that leads them no where. It's a leap into something to grab onto. And kids are taking drugs and talking about an experience, aren't they? And people are grabbing onto reincarnation and witch-craft and astrology and all kinds of screwball stuff because they've lost all the rational options. And they've x-ed God out along with everything else and they're just jumping all over the place into, into contentless, meaningless stuff. You see that's what happens to the man who, who cannot have a content, oriented, substantial faith in God, you see. You don't need to jump into the, the absurd there is a God and He's real and you can put your faith in Him. You don't need to believe in believing you can believe in God. Everything is hopeless for man, everything, unless there is a God, he winds up jumping around like a man on a proverbial pogo stick from one leap to another and everyone of them is as vapid and empty as the one before. And he's trapped in this horrible tension and that's why he kills himself, that's why he does stupid things like build a raft and float to Sweden, because he has no rational answers.

There is only one rational answer and that's God. The God who made the universe. And there have been men from the time of Adam who have believed in God, and life for them has been meaningful, and life for them has had substance, life for them has had the conviction of a future reality that they base their life on, and you know what? When their life ended they were right. Stephen banked his life on it, remember this morning? And as he was dying beneath those stones crushing his body he looked up and the Bible says he saw, "the Son of God at the right hand of the throne." And he said, "Jesus, receive my spirit." You know what? That glimpse vindicated everything that man died because he believed Him. Believing in God gives reason for living. So we see the nature of faith and the testimony of faith. The people who do believe God don't get trapped in the absurd, they have meaning to life.

Thirdly let's look at the illustration of faith, and this is good. Verse 3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Now here's what he wants to do, he's saying to these Jews, you must have faith. And he's saying in a, in effect in verse 3 and you already do because you already believe that God created the universe, and surely they did. And so he's saying, I'm not asking you to muster up something that you can't muster, you already have a faith in God that He is, and that He made the world and the universe, so you've got a beginning of faith. Now that's a fantastic statement in verse 3, belief that the visible world and the universe and the ages are created by God is a conviction of faith not sight, you ... nobody knows that by sight, nobody can say, well I was there when it was done, yes I saw, I saw how it all started. You can't say that. Nobody was there. The only thing we know about the creation of the universe was what we know by faith. And so he simply says through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God. I mean all of us Jews believe in God, and we all believe that the worlds were framed and the only way we could ever know that is by faith, we could never know that by sight. So he says I'm not asking something of you that you don't already have. All the reader's believed this, surely of the Book of Hebrews. And he says we understand or we perceive with intelligence, now that the worlds were framed by God. Now you know there are some people who don't know that? Do you know there are some people who don't know that God made the universe? That's right, some people who have very high I.Q.'s. Now the word for worlds there is aion, ages, it has to do not only with creating the universe but all of the ages of administration within the universe. It means the whole of creation, the whole thing was formed by the word rhema, the specific utterance of God, God spoke and it came into existence. Now Moses had taught them this, they had a Pentateuch, they had Genesis, they knew how it all began. You see he's simply establishing here that faith is not so much a foreign thing to them, by faith they believed that God made the world.

Do you know that the origin of this, of the universe is a problem that philosophers can't solve, did you know that? They can't do it. Bertrand Russell spent 90 years as a philosopher, on my desk I have a book that he wrote entitled, "Why I Am Not A Christian." In it he gives some of the most inept

arguments against Christianity conceivable, and he blasts Christianity, and he spent his life blast-ing it. And he had all of these answers about origins and he summed up his life after 90 years a philosopher with these words, "Philosophy has proved a washout to me." He never did get any answers. He once boldly wrote in that volume, "Why I'm Not A Christian," these words, "I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world. The whole conception of God is derived from ancient Oriental despotism, a con-ception quite unworthy of free men." He went on to say, "We must conquer the world by intelligence." Sounds vigorous, doesn't it? After 90 years of that he said that the whole thing's a washout, he died not knowing anything, absolutely nothing. He didn't have anything to believe in. You know what philosophers are? They're doodlers with words instead of pencils. They just make a whole lot of verbal squiggles. Colossians 2:8 says this, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy."

You say, well science knows the reason the universe came in ... science has got it, philosophers might not but scientists know. Scientists don't know. You say, you mean scientists don't know how the universe began? Of course they don't. Science can only observe what's going on and tell you what's going on not why it's going on. Now watch this, science simply discovers laws that already exist, but science is stupidly trying to push past what it can do into what it can't do and that is observe things before they existed. I'm afraid science can't assume that burden. You see you might call me John, that's one thing, but that doesn't begin to explain my ex-istence. Now science can say, oh that is a rock, oh that is a chemi-cal, oh that is ... but it cannot say where it came from or why it came, it only knows what it observes. But you know what? Scientists and philosophers have always locked arms and they've always said, we will now tell you where the universe came from. You want to hear what they said? Here's a good lesson, a typical evolutionary look at the explanation of the beginning of the universe. For over 100 years they, they invented a theory which they called The Nebula Theory, on the creation of the universe. Now I'll give you a little bit about it, this is interesting. The solar system was once a rapidly moving nebula, you got that? As it cooled and contracted its speed of rotation grad-ually increased, it just kept going faster, faster, faster nebula. Eventually enough force - was available because of the speed of it, centrifugal force was available to expel some of the material. Nuclei of condensation formed within the ring, it subsequently splattered all over the place developing into planets while the dense center mass became the sun. Now that's way back when they thought the sun in our little deal was the only thing, and it was all a spinning nebulae. You say, hey, where did nebulae come from? Now the man who began that theory was a man named Emanuel Swedenborg, who headed up the cult known as the Church of the New Jerusalem. He said however this, he did not claim credit, he said, this was not my theory I received it in spiritualistic communication from the dwellers on the moon. Now the nebula theory lasted for over a 100 years and it was replaced by the Tidal Theory. Now this was the effort of George Darwin, son of Charles. He was anxious to extend his father's concept of evolution into the whole universe, so he concocted an intriguing story of how the earth and the moon evolved from a large mass of hot plastic 4 billion years ago. Just think about that. This doesn't ah, really work too well and so it lasted very briefly and gave way to a new theory of the universe called the Steady State Theory, and that is the theory of

self-creating matter. The self-creating matter has the astonishing ability to condense into galaxies within which evolve stars, planets, satellites, comets, plants, animals, people. Self-creating matter. We are all the progeny of a vacuum. Well this was in great conflict with the Super Dense Theory, known as the Big Bang. It began with a primeval nucleus 5 billion years ago which exploded. Now the nucleus was so dense that when it expanded...that it expanded by an additional 10 to the 44th power and thus it became the universe, originally this super dense glob was the size of our universe but it got blown up 10 to the 44th power. And the big mass was 100 trillion times the density of water and the name of it was Yolem. But this theory didn't make it well either and new ones keep coming.

You see the problem is that a puny little mind, however many test tubes and Bunsen burners it has cannot grasp the infinite. Science has no access to the why of anything. Paul said to Timothy, beware of science falsely so called. There's nothing wrong with good science, observable science but science has no business getting into origins. There never was any Yolem or any Super Dense gob or any self-creating hydrogen mass. Do you know that what the philosophers and the scientists can't discover you and I can, by faith we know that God made the worlds-. Science and philosophy doesn't give up, it takes our children in school and teaches them all of this baloney. And you know what all of evolution is based on? It's based upon the astute principle nobody times nothing equals everything. And even the evolutionists are doing tailspins trying to figure out what they're saying. Kerkut, who is an evolutionist of some great rank in the world from England has recently written a book in the last 5 or 6 years and in that book he ... writing from a view of an evolutionist in an anthology of evolution a very important statement, he takes all of the basic tenets of evolution and says, "Gentlemen we cannot prove any of them, in fact they are probably more likely to be disproved, we better rethink our case." And I read a quote from one evolutionary scientist who said this, "I reject the idea of a Creator God so what other alternatives do I have?" He didn't have any. Professor T.L. Moore of the physics department of The University of Cincinnati said, "To talk of the evolution of thought from sea slime to amoeba, from amoeba to a self-conscious thinking man means nothing, it is the easy solution of a thoughtless brain." End quote. Astronomers tell us that there are an average of a 100 billion stars in a galaxy. At least a 100 million galaxies in known space. And if Einstein is right total space is a billion times greater than known space, that makes a lot of stars. I won't even bother to give you the figure because I can't understand it either. Sir James Jeans says it's a figure equal to the number of grains of sand existing on the earth, that's how many stars. And then some little guy comes along and says, wow, once there was a little Yolem, pooff. I open my Bible in Genesis 1 and it says God made it all. God made it all. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, that's something the smartest people in our world haven't learned yet, and we're not lord-ing it over them we're only trying to show you that these things are ours apprehended by faith. You can disprove evolution here on earth let alone evolution in the universe. And I've, I've given you so many figures and so many statistics on this in times past I'll refresh your mind with a couple of thoughts. Just the population of the world alone disproves evolution, there's only ... something around 3 billion people in the world, scientists tell us the world increases at 1 per cent a year average, that reduced from a logarithm figure. And if the population has been going on for let's say 5 hundred

thousand years, some evolutionists say as much, much as a million or 2 million, but let's say men began 5 hundred thousand years ago and somebody lost his tail, jumped out of his tree and found a woman and ah, you know? And let's say that happened 5 hundred thousand years ago, then as if the scientists tell us man increases an average of 1 per cent per year, and he's been increasing for 5 hundred thousand years the population of the world today would be 37 point 5 billion, per square foot. You start with the population today and reduce it you run out of people somewhere about 10 thousand years ago, and we believe that's when the Bible says, in the beginning God created man.

The whole concept of trying to explain everything without God is a fool's effort. We understand it by faith. Faith comprehends that which the mind of man, no matter how brilliant cannot understand. In - ah, First Corinthians 2, listen to this, verse 9, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." You see what he's saying? Two things there. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. Now that's talking about physical perception, empiricism. Neither have entered into the heart of man, that's talk-ing about philosophy or rationalism. Man does not know by science nor by philosophy the truth of God. Eye hath not seen it, it hasn't entered into his heart. "But God has revealed it unto us by his Spirit." Do you see the next verse? Fantastic. Faith comprehends. Faith not only comprehends God and the creation of the universe but faith compre-hends salvation in Jesus Christ, doesn't it? How are the just to live? By faith. Jesus said, "He that believeth in me hath life."

John Goff the evangelist of years gone by told a story of two little boys he once saw in a London hospital. A lovely story, listen to it. "Their cots were side by side, one had a fever the other had been struck by a truck. His little body was all broken up. The little fellow with the fever was very weak and the other little boy spoke to him and said, say Willy, I was down to the mission Sunday School and they told me about Jesus, and I believe if you ask Jesus He'll help you. They said that if we believe in Him and pray to Him when we die He'll come and take us to be with Him. Willy said, but what if I'm asleep when He comes and I, and I can't ask Him? And the other little fella said, just hold up your hand, that's what we did in Sunday School, we held up our hand, I guess He sees it. Willy was too weak, so his little friend managed to lean over and prop up his pillow and brace it under Willy's arm. And Willy had his arm up and he fell asleep. In the morning when the nurse came she found Willy, dead, but his arm was still propped up." Now you know that the Lord saw his arm. You say, well that's awful simple faith. And Jesus said, "Except a man become (what?) as a little child, he cannot enter the kingdom."

Father we thank You that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And we thank You that we can believe in You, that You're worthy to be trusted.

God I thank You that You're so real, I've never seen You, I've never seen Jesus, never seen the Holy Spirit, but You're so real to me - there's a present reality, ohh, I know You're here with me. And heaven is real Father. And Lord even Your second coming is real, I know You're coming, I even

visualize what it's going to be like when You call me and I meet You in the clouds of the air. God I don't have any previews of it but I know it by faith. And not only that I'm banking my life on it. I'm giving You all the years of my life, to the teaching of the Word of God because I believe it. And God there are many other dear people in this place who are banking their eternal destiny on the fact that You are who You claimed in this Book that we have in our hands, and that there is a heaven, and there is a second coming, and God we're banking on it, and we're sure of it.

And Lord there's some other people who don't have anything to bank on. They can't bet their life on anything but some kind of a mystic leap into the absurd. They're hoping maybe for reincarnation, or maybe if they get so stoned on drugs they won't have to face the issue. Or they're gambling on some kind of destiny just by virtue of their own design. But God they're caught in a - terrible tension, in a scary kind of realization that what they hope may not be so. God may they this night come by faith to Jesus Christ and believe in Him, and in God.

While your heads are bowed as we close our time tonight, you've been so patient, so gracious as we've taught you. But let me just say this as we close, there may be some of you here tonight who want to believe in something, you desperately need to, your heart is scream-ing and crying out for reality. I submit to you the proof is in and Jesus is who He claimed, and you can come into a personal relationship with the God of the universe through Him, and all He asks is that you believe. And when you believe in Christ and you believe in what He has done for you and believe that He is God, your sins are taken away and heaven becomes your promised home. You have meaning and purpose to life. Now we haven't explained all about how to know Christ and how to receive Him but if that's the prayer of your heart just whisper right now to God and say, God I want this, I want to believe, I want to put my faith in You, I want to know truth and reality. Put God to the test. God, if it's real show me. Jesus said, if any man really wills to know His will he'll know the doctrine. God help me to believe, just pray that simple prayer, I want to believe.

If the Spirit of God has kind of spoken to your heart and you sense that you really want to believe in Christ, you're ready to commit yourself to this faith we invite you to come, don't be embarrassed, why we're so happy to have you come, we're just rejoicing with you. Don't go away without committing your life to Christ in faith, it's so important.

Our Father I pray that You'll do Your perfect work in the hearts of those who are open, oh God, may nobody leave this place who hasn't put his trust in You. Some came here tonight empty may they go home filled.

Others Lord might want to come to pray for someone that they care about who needs to know You, God may they even come and spend some time in prayer.

Some may desire to unite with Grace Church fellowship and family, bring them tonight also, and even their coming might be the means of some other one coming to Christ.

Bless our time and our closing response, in Christ's name.

Amen.

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