

WitnessKit 3

God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New
Testaments,
Guided by the Book

Letter to the Hebrews

Class 24

Hebrews Chapter II—What Does
Faith Have to Do with It?

A verse to read together:
Hebrews 11:6

**6 But without faith
it is impossible to please Him,
for he who comes to God
must believe that He is,
and *that* He is a rewarder
of those who diligently seek Him.**

Endurance

Hebrews chapter 10 closed with a strong command never to throw away our confidence, but rather to practice enduring faith.

³⁵ “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:”

Endurance

- Chapter 11 begins a **review of the entire Bible** to show us the faith and endurance of the people who were approved by God. Their endurance is testimony to the reality of eternal life—they did not receive the promise in this life. They had to wait for all of us.

The Bible defines faith, in action:

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. **Substance**

Hebrews 11

¹ Now faith is
the **substance** of things hoped for,
the **evidence** of things not seen.

Faith is substance:

- Substance: ὑποστασις *hupostasis* = Substructure or foundation, an actually existing substance, like bedrock
- Things hoped for: ἐλπίζομενων, *elpizomenon* = things hopefully and confidently trusted for
- Evidence: ἐλεγχος *elegchos* = a proof, or a test by which something is proved
- Things: πραγματων *pragmaton* = accomplished facts or existing things

Faith is substance:

- The implication: Faith is REAL—not just theoretical. The things we confidently trust God for, based upon His promises, are REAL. They are accomplished facts in heaven, even though we cannot see them now. This is something like the “ideal” which is real in heaven—more real than the particulars that are examples of it. Faith is as real as bedrock, and produces practical good things.
- Faith is our connection to the things confidently hoped for, from this side of the division between earth and heaven, and faith is a real connection, a real foundation upon which we are building.

Hebrews 11

¹ Now faith is
the **substance** of things hoped for,
the **evidence** of things not seen.

The Bible defines faith, in action.

Facets of Faith

Faith is

1. Substance
2. **Means of obtaining good testimony**

Hebrews 11

- 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**
- 2 For by it the elders obtained a *good testimony.***

Faith is the Biblical means of obtaining a good testimony—not just from people, but from God.

- The elders are the Old Testament saints who are our examples in faith today.
- They obtained a good testimony, as reported in the Bible, by means of their faith. This chapter will repeat their good testimony.
- Even though we may never be “famous for our faith,” we have access to the same kind of good testimony with God, because we can exercise faith, too.
- For faith to be valid, it must be faith in something that is true.

The Bible defines faith, in action.

Facets of Faith

Faith is

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. **Choice of belief regarding origins**

Hebrews 11

**³ By faith we understand
that the worlds were framed
by the word of God,
so that
the things which are seen
were not made of things
which are visible.**

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- Hebrews 11:3 is a **very** scientific statement. “The things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”
- We know that elementary particles are not visible to us, yet we believe the physical world is made of them.
- The Bible teaches that God spoke the worlds into existence. “He spoke, and it was done.”
Psalm 33:6-12

If you dig deeper

Into Quantum Mechanics,

- The physical world becomes more and more ephemeral.
- It becomes less and less solid.
- The elementary particles we studied in science class are themselves made of more elementary fragments, with a search for even more elementary items to explain their existence. The search appears to go farther and farther away from the matter our senses can recognize.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- We know that there are only three possible choices for the ultimate beginning: total nothingness, an impersonal beginning, and a Personal Beginning. That is knowledge.
- Faith is understanding which is the correct answer that matches reality, and choosing the correct answer—the Personal Beginning—our Good Creator, as described in the Bible.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- Total nothingness defies belief as an origin for the universe. “Nothing comes from nothing.” Even Rogers and Hammerstein proclaimed that in *The Sound of Music*.
- An impersonal beginning has no answers to why things exist, or why right and wrong exist, or why personality has meaning, or why physical laws exist rather than mere chance.
- An impersonal beginning implies the eternality of matter—but the Big Bang says that is not correct.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- Faith is choosing the correct answer—the Personal Beginning—our Good Creator, as described in the Bible. A Creator with Mind could create the universe where nothing existed before, or make visible things out of invisible things, if He were wise enough and powerful enough.
- For faith in a Personal Beginning to match reality, that Personal Beginning has to be an amazing One.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- A Personal Beginning is a match with reality as we know it—including knowing we have a soul, mind, and personality. A Personal Beginning explains so much more of reality than an impersonal beginning ever could.
- Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3) Matter cannot be the source of spirit. Only Spirit can be the Source of spirit.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- This is a very small step of faith—to choose belief in the good God described in the Bible—and only the Bible gives us reason to believe God is Good, even though the world contains both good and evil.
- Islam teaches that One God exists, but theirs is an unknowable God who is the source of both good and evil. Their concept of God is that He is intrinsically Will rather than intrinsically Good.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- We see humans that act as though their will is the most important thing in their lives. We do not see those individuals exemplify goodness.
- We see the need for us all to understand the difference between good and evil.
- Will does not explain such a difference.
- This is a form of religious determinism, and it is not a match with reality.

Faith is the proper choice of belief regarding origins.

- The concept of God as ultimately will cannot be correct as the Source of Good. Such an idea merges good and evil.
- There has to be human error in such an understanding. Christian forms of the same thing are also mistaken, such as belief in God's Sovereignty as determinism rather than believing in actual human choices.
- We have written on our consciences the importance of good triumphing over evil.
- The Biblical concept of God is a far better match with what we know is right.

The Bible defines faith, in action.

Facets of Faith

Faith is

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. **Choice of belief regarding origins**
4. **Means of obtaining righteousness**

Hebrews 11

4 By faith

**Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice
than Cain,**

through which he obtained witness

that he was righteous,

God testifying of his gifts;

and through it

He, being dead,

still speaks.

Genesis 4:2-10

- Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Genesis 4:2-10

- ⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, *"Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"* ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."
- ⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Genesis 4:2-10

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, *"Where is Abel your brother?"*

He said, *"I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"*

10 And He said, *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."* Gen 4:2-10 (NKJV)

Hebrews 11 explains why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's offering.

- Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. Cain did not.
- In addition, “Abel speaks **to us** even though he has died,” because God explains what happened through His word.
- When Genesis states that “*Abel's blood cries to God from the ground,*” that implies that Abel did not end at death, and that his life and death had meaning, even though his life was cut short.
- It implies that God, in His justice, is aware and concerned about injustice on this earth.

Hebrews 11 explains why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's offering.

□ Abel's faith had meaning in eternity.

□ Our faith has meaning in eternity.

Righteousness is obtained by faith.

□ Abel's righteousness was obtained by faith.

□ Our righteousness is obtained by faith.

This principle goes all the way back to the beginning of human life.

In our choice of belief about origins.

- The evolutionary view of human origins has made people proud, thinking that now we are so much more advanced than the first humans.
- The Bible teaches that God valued the very earliest humans and He values us now. Abel mattered to God, and so did Cain, as you can tell by God's response to the whole situation. God tried to prevent evil by communicating with Cain early in the process, but Cain did not accept God's advice.
- In many ways, the Bible has that kind of advice for everyone, if only people paid attention.

The Bible defines faith, in action.

Facets of Faith

Faith is...

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. Choice of belief regarding origins
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. **Means of pleasing God**

Hebrews 11

- ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, *"and was not found, because God had taken him"*; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
- ⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Faith is the means of pleasing God.

- God sees our hearts. He knows our motivations and our wishes. We must act out of **faith in Him** in order to please Him.
- We must believe
 - ▣ That He exists,
 - ▣ And that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.
- How do we please Him?
 - ▣ By believing in and diligently seeking Him.

Hebrews 11:6

- God holds our lives and our eternity in His hands. Learning how to please Him is vitally important. Many religious activities are designed to please God, but the critical starting point for pleasing Him from the heart is Hebrews 11:6. **But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

We can understand **the Bible's definition of faith**, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

Faith is...

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. **Choice of belief regarding origins**
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. **Means of pleasing God**
6. **Means of escaping condemnation**

Hebrews 11

- ⁷ By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

Faith is the means of escaping condemnation.

- Fear and faith are not mutually exclusive.
- Fearing condemnation motivates toward true faith—if we trust God enough to search for truth.
- Noah believed God's warning and followed God's directions. By that faith in action, he and his family escaped the judgment of the flood. By that faith, he received righteousness as his inheritance—for eternity.

Faith is the means of escaping condemnation.

- Noah was already attempting to live righteously, during a time when nobody else was. Enormous additional faith was required to meet the precise needs of the time. How foolish he must have seemed to build an ark! How lonely was his faith!
- We are alive today because of Noah's faith. Faith preserves lives.

Faith is the means of escaping condemnation.

- Noah condemned the world by demonstrating the practicality of faith. All those who rejected faith perished in the flood. They refused to allow God to transform their lives.
- We live in a similar time to Noah's time. People are rejecting God and choosing violence in many places and in many ways. God has given us future prophecies in the Bible to reach those like Noah, who have faith in Him and in His word. Paying attention brings survival and saves lives.

We can understand **the Bible's definition of faith**, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. **Choice of belief regarding origins**
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. **Means of pleasing God**
6. **Means of escaping condemnation**
7. **Means of receiving eternal life and purpose**

Hebrews 11

- ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

Abraham never owned any land in the promised land other than a tomb for Sarah.

- Abraham did not receive the gift of ownership of the promised land in his lifetime, even though he was a wanderer there, living in tents.
- Yet God's promise still stands—Abraham will receive ownership of his place in the promised land after the resurrection of the righteous.
- By faith he moved to the promised land and by faith he sojourned there. He was waiting for the eternal city promised to him.

Faith is the means of eternal life and purpose.

- Abraham's faithful patience demonstrates eternal life as a promise of God.
- Abraham received righteousness by faith, and that righteousness entitles him to a place in the eternal city.

We can understand the Bible's definition of faith, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. Choice of belief regarding origins
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. Means of pleasing God
6. Means of escaping condemnation
7. Means of receiving eternal life and purpose

Faith Is:

8. Means of strength and endurance

Hebrews 11

- ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.
¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.
(NKJV)

Faith is the means of receiving strength and endurance from God.

- Sarah was too old to bear children when Isaac was born. By faith, she received the strength to receive a miracle that everyone would know was a miracle.
- We have continuing proof of that miracle in the descendants of Isaac who are alive all over the world today.
- We truly cannot count all those descendants.

We can understand the Bible's definition of faith, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. Choice of belief regarding origins
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. Means of pleasing God
6. Means of escaping condemnation
7. Means of receiving eternal life and purpose

Faith Is:

8. Means of strength and endurance
9. Means of waiting for God's promises

Hebrews 11

- ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Pilgrims: Jacob made this confession in front of the most powerful political leader on earth at that time.

- ⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.
- ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old *are* you?"
- ⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of **the years of my pilgrimage** *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the **years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.**"

Pilgrims: Jacob made this confession in front of the most powerful political leader on earth at that time.

- ¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. ¹¹ And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.
Genesis 47:7-12 (NKJV)

Faith was the means of waiting for God's promises.

- The patriarchs considered themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth because of their citizenship in the eternal city of God.
- Their faith gave them the strength to wait for God's promises, and in Jacob's situation, to speak of that perspective in front of Pharaoh.

We can understand the Bible's definition of faith, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. Choice of belief regarding origins
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. Means of pleasing God
6. Means of escaping condemnation
7. Means of receiving eternal life and purpose

Faith Is:

8. Means of strength and endurance
9. Means of waiting for God's promises
10. Means of enduring hardship successfully

Hebrews 11

- ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called,*" ¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. (NKJV)

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully.

- God tested Abraham's faith and Isaac's faith in the most extreme way. In the process God demonstrated the ideas of substitutionary atonement and resurrection.
- God had promised that Isaac was the son of promise, through whom Abraham's descendants would be born that would outnumber the stars.
- God had fulfilled that promise initially by the miraculous birth of Isaac.
- This test needed ANOTHER miracle.

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully.

- The only two ways for God to keep that promise in the middle of this test were:
 - ▣ either to provide a substitution sacrifice or
 - ▣ to provide a resurrection.
- Abraham's and Isaac's faith were tested and they both passed the test, and God passed the test by providing a substitute.
- Isaac in this instance was a type of Christ—a symbol of Jesus' willingness to be our substitute and to rise from the dead on our behalf.

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully.

- The book of Hebrews has already pointed out that Jesus Christ's death on the cross was a **once for all** sacrifice, in substitution for all of us.
- The test Abraham and Isaac went through was a picture from the early era of the Bible, of Jesus' death and resurrection as our substitute.

Hebrews 11

- ²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
- ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.
- ²² By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully and dying well.

- Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were each strong in faith in old age and as they were dying. They looked to the future of their families, based upon God's promises.
- They were full of life, even as their death approached.

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully and dying well.

- Jacob passed the blessing he had sought from God on to his grandsons, bearing in mind the eternal promise. Genesis 48:3-4, and 15-16 says ³ Then Jacob said to Joseph: "*God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'*..."

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully and dying well.

- ¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said: *"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, ¹⁶ The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."* Genesis 48:15-16 (NKJV)

Faith is the means of enduring difficulties successfully and dying well.

- Then Jacob blessed all his sons, and then he drew his last breath. The Bible reports, ³³ *And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*
- Genesis 49:33 (NKJV)
- It was some time until his sons held his funeral in the promised land, but he was gathered to his people right then—in the eternal city for which he had waited.

Enduring Difficulties Successfully and Dying Well: Hebrews 11

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Enduring Difficulties Successfully and Dying Well: Hebrews 11

- 27** By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.
- 28** By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Enduring Difficulties Successfully and Dying Well: Hebrews 11

- ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land, whereas* the Egyptians, attempting *to do so*, were drowned.
- ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.
- ³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

We can understand the Bible's definition of faith, by considering

Facets of Faith

facets of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

1. Substance
2. Means of obtaining good testimony
3. Choice of belief regarding origins
4. Means of obtaining righteousness
5. Means of pleasing God
6. Means of escaping condemnation
7. Means of receiving eternal life and purpose

Faith Is:

8. Means of strength and endurance
9. Means of waiting for God's promises
10. Means of enduring hardship successfully
11. Means of experiencing God's power on earth.

Hebrews 11: Faith is the means of experiencing God's power on earth.

- ³² And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who **through faith** subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again.

Hebrews 11: Faith is the means of experiencing God's power on earth—even in apparent defeat.

- And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy.

Hebrews 11

- They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.
- ³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ **God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**
Hebrews 11:21-40 (NKJV)

The reality of God's Goodness—

- And the faithful endurance of those who seemed **defeated** by persecution in this life—
- Demonstrates that God has something better planned for eternity.
- We will be made perfect there. We will live there. We will live forever. Faith is the means by which that becomes possible.
- Isaiah 45:17 describes it this way: *“Israel has been saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; You will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity.”* (NASB1995)

The Once-for-All Atonement
accomplished by Messiah,
through His death, burial and resurrection,
made eternal life possible for all of us.

Our part for obtaining eternal life is
to repent of sins
and exercise faith.

Faith is trusting God.

Faith is believing His promises.

Ephesians 2:8-10

- 8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,
- 9** not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- 10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (NKJV)

Faith

- Faith is believing His message of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Faith is commitment to His kingdom in our hearts.
- Faith is receiving His salvation as a free gift.

Our Faith in Jesus Christ and in the Good God Described in the Bible

For our faith to be valid, the source has to be valid. Of course, we have demonstrated multiple times in the course of our studies that the Bible is valid.

The Bible IS true communication from God.

Encouragement to Persevere



If you study the Bible for yourself—
open to the possibility of God's goodness, God's
existence, God's truthfulness, and God's
power to do miracles—
then the doubts gradually fall away as you create
a data base of the Biblical facts in your
memory. Personal study is a very good
antidote to skepticism.

The best place to diligently seek God: The
Bible.

Hebrews 10 and 11 encourage us to seek God in His word.

- ³⁵ “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:”
- ⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11

- They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.*
- ³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ **God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**
Hebrews 11:21-40 (NKJV)

The chronicles of the faithful

- This list of people filled with faith was a list of people who had to wait to receive the promise.
- They waited for the promised Messiah, and each one in this chapter died without seeing Him, (except for Enoch.)
- God had that “something better” planned for us, who live on this side of the Suffering Messiah’s life on earth. We have the blessing of understanding much more about God’s plans, because we have the entire Bible.
- We still wait for Messiah’s return to reign as King over a restored creation, and we look forward to that day. In the meantime, we must “redeem the time, because the days are evil.” (KJV) Ephesians 5:16.

I Thessalonians 5:21



But examine everything carefully;
hold fast to that which is good.



Homework

In 3 Sets

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

Instructions: Read the embedded verse references and see if you agree with the essay. Write why you agree or disagree.

Premise:

God has unlimited power to accomplish righteousness. God is morally perfect and also perfect in power and authority. I John 1:5 in the Bible states that *“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”* Matthew 28:18 states that *“all power/authority is given to Jesus in heaven and in earth.”* The principle is stated in regard to a narrow application in II Corinthians 9:8 as *“God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you many have an abundance for every good deed.”*

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

Question:

How does an individual receive God's power for righteousness within his or her own life?

Ephesians 1:18-23, Ephesians 5:5-18, I Corinthians 10:13, II Corinthians 3:5-6 and 18, II Corinthians 5:17 and many other passages indicate that this question is valid, and that God's promises include that kind of gift.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

Barriers:

- Much of the Bible is devoted to disclosing barriers between people and God. These barriers block the reception of His power to do what is right. The Bible lists three main classes of barriers. Some barriers are discussed explicitly while others are revealed through events.
- **Barrier 1. Unbelief:** Unbelief is a matter of decision making. God draws us toward Him, and we either respond by searching for truth with a willingness to believe it when we find it, OR we run from Him in unbelief.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

Barriers:

Every refusal to seek God, any rejection of God's truth, any refusal to search for truth or to love truth will create barriers between people and God.

(Hebrews 3:19-4:2, Romans 9:31-10:13, Romans 14:23, Jeremiah 29:11-14, Zephaniah 1:6, 12, and 2:3, John 3:19-21)

God does not want us to believe anything that is false, so the barrier of unbelief is a truth issue.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

Barrier 2. Sin: This barrier between God and people takes many forms.

Sin includes willfully breaking God's law, inadvertently breaking God's law, actions done in unbelief, and violation of one's own conscience, plus the category of sins of omission. If one refuses to fulfill a responsibility God has given, that is sin. (James 2:8-11, Ephesians 2:1-3, I John 3:4, Hebrews 9:7, Romans 2:12-16, Romans 14:23, James 4:17)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

- **Barrier 3. Refusal to forgive others:** An unforgiving attitude toward other people causes one's own sins to remain a barrier. God will not forgive those who will not forgive others. (Matthew 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:30-32, Matthew 7:2, Matthew 18:21-35) This attitude also hinders one's freedom by making bitterness a limitation on thoughts and opportunities. Bitterness is a heavy load to carry, even when the causes are serious.
- As long as these barriers are present, an individual cannot claim to be righteous.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 1

- Clearly one must find a way to move these barriers aside, in order to be righteous by definition and in order to have free communication with God.
- “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the LORD will not hear me,” Psalm 66:18. Conversely, if communication is open and one desires to become a righteous person, he can pray for God’s help and expect to receive God’s affirmative answer. (I John 5:13-15)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- **Removing Barrier Number One: Unbelief**
- The barrier of unbelief is not removed by gritting one's teeth and trying harder to believe what one actually thinks is false, or by "believing" in some vague, emotions-only context.
- The barrier of unbelief is removed by searching for truth in two places: the Bible itself and evidence from the world around us. Romans 10:17 states that "faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." A book claiming to be God's word is the right place to search for truth, given the original premise that God is morally perfect and perfect in power.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- A book from Him should be true. Many people of exemplary character who study the Bible thoroughly believe that the Bible is true, so integrity demands that one search for truth there. (The search is also wonderfully rewarding and often surprising. Daily-routine Bible study is a way of giving God the best part of your day.)(Isaiah 1:18)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- Evidence from the world around us: The technical name for the study of the evidence for God in the world around us is Apologetics. In the courses of the WitnessKit website, we have been studying Apologetics. It is not enough for a religious text to be self-consistent. It must also be coherent with reality. The study of Biblical Apologetics gives many reasons to place the Bible in the category of coherent with reality.
- Once you have realized that the Bible really is a book from God, for you, then it is time to commit to following Him with the Bible as your guide.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- Now it is time to embark on a personal application study.
- Bible study booklets by NavPress, called *Lessons on Assurance* and *Growing in Christ*, pull together the basics of theology with practical faith based on God's promises. The principles in today's homework study and in those small books provide a starting point for daily fellowship with God – I John chapter 1.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- God made the Bible accessible and helpful for those willing to search for truth. The Bible teaches that in order to please God, you *“must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) **If you wish to begin this search, that wish itself is an evidence of God’s work in your life.** Philippians 2:13 states that *“it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*
- This is not a small matter. It is tremendously helpful to know that God is at work in your life.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- The Bible also teaches that God will make the truth of the Bible known to those who are (1) willing to do God's will and (2) to abide in His word. (John 7:16-18, John 8:31-32)
- The entire Bible can easily be read in one year by reading two chapters in the Old Testament and one chapter in the New Testament each day. Many Bibles have a daily reading plan included in the helpful materials at the front or back of the book. The Psalms can be read in five months, one chapter per day. They are helpful for bringing the law of God to the personal level of prayer and asking God questions.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 2

- The same process for receiving God's salvation through repentance, faith, the covenant by sacrifice, and prayer, can be found in the Psalms as is revealed in the New Testament. The covenant by sacrifice was fulfilled by Messiah's suffering death in our place, and rising victorious over death.
- A man struggling with unbelief told Jesus Christ, "*Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.*" It is right to pray that sort of prayer if it expresses your situation.
- If you are at the same point in your life, pray the same prayer. Then keep reading.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

Removing Barrier Number Two: Sin

- First the problem has to be faced. Righteousness requires perfection. God's terms for communication require perfection. God's terms are impossible – for us, but not for Him. He is the One who had to find a way to overcome the sin barrier, because we cannot create a way to get rid of the barrier by ourselves.
- God's dilemma was this. God's perfect justice requires that every sin be punished by separation from Him, but His perfect mercy requires that He make a way for us to reach Him.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

Removing Barrier Number Two: Sin

- That way had to be open to our rejection, because we are creatures made in His image with the power of making choices of real consequence. We are not zombies or programmed machines or mere animals at the mercy of our chemical makeup. We are morally responsible agents. Both our decisions to commit sins and our decision to seek God or not to seek Him are our own decisions. We are responsible for them.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- We cannot seek God unless His Holy Spirit draws us toward Him. The desire to seek Him is evidence of His work in our lives. (John 6:44) We are responsible for our reaction to that sense of being drawn. The opportunity to seek Him may be lost if we delay or reject.
- The Pharisees rejected God's purpose for themselves (Luke 7:30) because their opportunity to seek Him came when John the Baptist was preaching repentance. They refused to repent or be baptized as evidence of repentance. They refused to admit their need of cleansing from sin.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- (Not all the Pharisees rejected, however. There was a remnant who found their way. Statements about groups in the Bible should be taken as generalizations rather than as comprehensive for every individual in the group.)
- In the future we will face judgment for our choices, and Jesus will be the Judge. God's solution, removing the sin barrier for us, was to send the Judge to us ahead of time.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Jesus is Infinite God as well as morally perfect Human. Jesus will decide our ultimate destiny. By Jesus' free choice to accept death on the cross in our place, and by His victory over death, the infinite justice of God's character was satisfied. Acts 17:31 tells us God will judge us through Jesus. What could be more fair than that—to judge us through the decision of Someone who shared all our troubles?

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Jesus took our separation from God the Father when He cried, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” The reality of hell is visible to us in the suffering of Jesus on the cross. The Judge freely took our punishment in our place. (Hebrews 4:13, Hebrews 9:27, Romans 3:23-28, Matthew 7:21-27, Revelation 20:11-15, Romans 2:12-16, Acts 10:39-43)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- God removes the sin barrier when we repent of our sins and turn to Him for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death in our place, believing that His resurrection demonstrates His power to give us a new life.
- God gives us Jesus' righteousness in place of our sins when we repent and trust in Him. He also gives us the power to do what is right, through His Holy Spirit who is given to us.
- Eternal life is an accompanying free gift, because the need to be separated from God to pay for our sins is gone. (1 Peter 3:18, Romans 8:1-4, Romans 5:1-9, Ephesians 2:8-10)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

Repentance is a choice, and repentance is our first step toward removing the sin barrier. So what is repentance?

- First of all, accepting God's definitions of sin and being remorseful for one's own failures. Then, repentance is turning one's wishes toward meeting God's requirements, with His help. Apart from Him we can do nothing. (John 15:5) Humility is an inherent part of repentance.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- It is a helpful thing each day to face one's own sins, consciously accept God's evaluation of them, and confess them to Him in prayer. True repentance includes a strong desire to forsake each sin with God's help.
- If you have never done this before, it is helpful to begin with the sins that are the most obvious to your own conscience. Then work through your list of all that you remember.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Then ask God to show you any that remain. Once you have done this, accept by faith that He has forgiven you, and leave those sins where He sends them – as far from you as the east is from the west.
- Don't allow anyone to keep throwing blame on you for them, because Jesus said, "Don't call someone I have cleansed unholy or unclean." (Acts 10:15 & 28 KJV)
- Even very religious people can fail at this beginning step if they try "to establish their own righteousness" rather than "submitting to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:1-3)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Temptation is not sin. Hebrews 4:12-16 states that *Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and yet never sinned*. Temptation must be resisted, or sin will follow.
- Sin is internal, usually, before it is external. There is a dividing line between temptation and coveting. The line is crossed when people choose to mentally reach for the temptation or to allow their imagination to continue in it. Coveting must be confessed immediately and directly to God, and His forgiveness must be accepted by faith. He promised “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Seeking God's forgiveness is a process. Each individual must seek forgiveness for the basic sin of trying to run his or her own life without God's help or rules. Then we must seek forgiveness for specific failures one at a time as the Holy Spirit reminds us of particular problems. This is mandatory.
- God will impress upon each person the sins that they know are a barrier between themselves and Him.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Other observers may see sins that seem much more serious than the ones the person is facing. If the individual is truly seeking God, God will deal with those other sins in His timing. It is amazing what God sometimes uses to bring people to repentance. God sees the future, and sometimes He appears to have a different set of priorities than we would have in a certain situation, because He knows what works.
- If one has the responsibility to point out someone's sins in the hopes of their finding forgiveness, it should be done with gentleness. (Galatians 6:1-10)

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Salvation can occur once repentance has taken place regarding the basic sin of self-will. Self-will equals rejection of God's right to be King.
- From that point, God will begin dealing with other sins in each life, as a Father deals with disciplining His children. (Psalm 103:11-19)
- There is a path of righteousness, and when a person just begins the Christian life, it may take some practice to stay on track, because there is a habitual way of thinking that God gradually transforms.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Another part of the process of being forgiven is to make redress or apology to other people when the situation demands it, after first seeking forgiveness from God.
- This is an area needing direct guidance from the Holy Spirit regarding all the practicalities such as timing, manner, and method. One must proceed with care, and with preparation to forgive the offended party if their response is hurtful.
- If the attempt is more likely to make the problem worse, leave it with God. Let Him fix it. Pray for the other party.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Sometimes a person you have offended will want you to grovel and will withhold forgiveness when your heart's desire is to reconcile with them. Reconciliation requires that both parties cooperate with God, and that may not happen instantaneously. It may not even happen within a lifetime. However, the forgiveness on your part will relieve that burden, whether they respond well or not.
- God is not on the side of groveling. Humility and humiliation are two different things. God does not want us to humiliate ourselves or others.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- If the person you have offended likes to humiliate other people, that is an important factor in any apology situation. An apology is not likely to help with that personality flaw. Some people view that as a great opportunity to exert improper power over you. Forgiveness does not demand that you allow them that wrong wish. Forgiveness is sturdy.
- Forgiveness from the heart will help, though, and God takes care of that part of the equation when you apologize to Him. He does not like to humiliate people, and He will free you by forgiving you.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- Because you have been forgiven by God, you do not have to grovel, AND you do not have to become angry by their desire for you to grovel. That wish on their part and their decision to forgive or not forgive you is really between them and God. Emotions are complicated. This is about rightness, not emotion.
- You cannot accomplish rightness for them, but you can receive rightness from God for yourself.
- You can release their response to Him. Sometimes forgiveness takes time on their part, so you can approach this process both realistically and optimistically, and leave the outcome with God.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- It is not wise to ask forgiveness repeatedly from someone who wants you to grovel. That does not help them or you. At that point, The John Wayne approach of *“Never apologize, it’s a sign of weakness”* may be appropriate.
- Their desire for you to grovel is a sin on their part, and you do not want to facilitate sin.
- However, any apology you make should not throw blame onto them for the problem, either.
- If you cannot make an apology without throwing blame, then an apology is probably not going to help reconciliation, and going on as if nothing happened might actually help.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- “I’m sorry I made you angry” is not an apology. “I’m sorry I ate the rest of the candy including your share” is.
- Sometimes people are offended by the sheer repetition of a wrong, and the repetition needs to stop. Repentance needs to last.
- Lastly, the success or failure of an attempt at human reconciliation is NOT a measure of the success of your repentance with God. You can be right with Him and be doing all that is in your power to be at peace with other people, and still not have success at reconciliation.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- God does not hold you responsible for the response of other people. He holds them responsible, and that is between them and Him. It really is not even your business.
- It is wise to remember that EVERYBODY is in some kind of process regarding their own sins and their fellowship with God, and people proceed at different speeds. If you have just reached a new level of spiritual maturity, let them have time to reach a better level, too.

Homework Lesson 24 Set 3

- God cares about people, even those who do not care about Him. He paid a huge price for our salvation “while we were yet enemies.”
- Romans 5:1-21 says that God’s grace triumphs over transgression. Read that entire chapter and especially notice verse 17.
- Finding His forgiveness is the key to that kind of triumph.
- This essay will continue in the next set of homework.