

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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.

Remember who this is written to.... Hebrews... some still need to be convinced to come all the way to saving trust in Christ. The writer has spent 10 chapters convincing them of the superiority of Christ.

Their problem is, if they leave Judaism they'll be leaving all they know... friends, family, they'll be cast out and rejected by everyone around them except for this small group of Hebrews who have become followers of Jesus Christ, those who have left everything to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

He has been encouraging them to come all the way to faith in Jesus Christ, to leave the empty form and ritualism of 1st Century Judaism which was not at all what God had given to Moses.

He is teaching that salvation is only by faith and he knows he must use Old Testament examples of Hebrews to show that salvation for them, like for us, was only by faith... not by works of the Law.

First, he'll tell us exactly what faith is... but for our study, because of the flood of false teaching from false teachers today, we must begin by understanding exactly what faith is not.

Faith is not what the false teachers of the Word of Faith Movement today teach. They teach that faith is a power we can possess to create our own reality. If we believe hard enough and give enough money we can become financially prosperous, we can have good health and we can guarantee the salvation of others... we can live our best life now. They are not teaching faith in God, they are teaching faith in faith.

We should never think to live our best life now... the only ones who are living their best lives now are those who are headed to Hell which is, sadly, exactly where many of today's false teachers and their followers will spend eternity.

**Verse 1a:** 'Now faith is the ***substance of things hoped for***...' Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What is he talking about here... things hoped for? Does he mean... I hope that it will be sunny tomorrow... I hope that my favorite politician is reelected... I hope that I can lose the 15 pounds I gained over Christmas? Does he mean, if I hope for a new car that if my faith is strong, if I hope hard enough I will receive it... that my faith will be the substance of the new car I had hoped for? Alas... I can hope really, really hard for a new car but unless I have rich parents to whom I can drop many hints or I have millions of TV followers like TBN... I probably won't get my new car... I'll have to be content with the one I have.

Where does faith come from... how is it built and strengthened?

Paul wrote, 'So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Rom 10:17

Faith, which is the substance of things hoped for... comes from hearing the Word of God. Therefore, it must also be the substance of what is heard from the Word of God... therefore, those things hoped for will also have come from the revelation of God's Word. Our hope is founded upon what we read in God's Word... founded upon what He has promised is coming in the future.

Faith is the substance of what God's Word tells us is ahead, waiting for us which is what we hope for... the full realization of our complete salvation... our resurrection or being taken up at the Rapture... our new, glorified eternal bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ... the unimaginable rewards that He has promised to give us for our faithful service while here during our present Earthly ministry... what it will mean to rule and reign with Him forever as His Bride. These are all wonderful things He has promised to those who love Him but they are things which are not yet realized... they are what await the Children of God. These are the things we hope for, these are the things God's Word reveals to us, and our faith, in what God has said, is what assures us of their reality.

For the one who has real faith... these things are already as good as done... as good as in our hands.

Some of us go to jobs every day. Then, every week or so we receive a paycheck which represents a certain amount of money. That money, which we can hold in our hands, becomes the substance of the things we hope for. My paycheck is the substance of a new coat or a new pair of shoes I hope for. Or I can put it in the bank, allowing it to accumulate and then it becomes the down payment on a new car for which I've hoped.

In the spiritual realm, the work we do is reading and meditating on God's Word. That produces faith which is the substance of what we hope for in eternity. Faith is what we can hold in our hands and deposit into the Bank of Heaven.

When we placed our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, the Bible says that He put His Holy Spirit into us; the Holy Spirit became our down payment of all that God has promised.

'In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,<sup>14</sup> who is the **guarantee of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.' Eph 1:13

The Holy Spirit in us guarantees our inheritance; He continually reminds us of the truth of God's Word and the absolute reality of all that He has promised to us in His Word.

The more we *go to work every day* (reading and knowing God's Word) the more our faith grows, which we are then able to deposit into the Heavenly Bank, from which we can withdraw faith whenever we need it.

Each of us has a guaranteed account in that Bank, the Bank of Heaven. We also each have our own safe deposit box into which God puts all of our eternal rewards that He will give to us when we stand before Him one day soon. This is true; we can fix this picture into our minds to remind ourselves daily. We are either enlarging our safe-deposit box or we are causing it to remain quite small. Some believers have safe-deposit boxes, for rewards, the size of football stadiums while others have safe-deposit boxes the size of matchboxes. It's our choice daily.

**Verse 1b: 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen.'**

**The things we hope for** refers to what is coming, the future fulfillment of all God has promised. The evidence of **things not seen** refers to what is... everything around us in the spiritual realm, both Earthly and Heavenly. This doesn't mean, 'things not seen' as in things that haven't happened yet so we have faith to believe that they will happen... it means, things that exist all around us in the spiritual realm which our earthly eyes cannot see.

When we know God's Word, our faith then proves to us the reality of all that is around us which we cannot see with our physical eyes. We know that God is real... that Heaven and Hell are real... that we are right now seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in Heavenly places... that angels are real, both elect and fallen... that God has given His angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways... that fallen angels and other evil spirits are constantly trying to destroy us.

Faith is the evidence of everything around us in the spiritual realm. Faith is the proof of all that exists which our physical eyes are not able to see. And again, the source of that faith is the same: 'Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.' The Word of God tells us these things are real and so faith believes it.

God's Word proves our faith and our faith proves to us God's Word.

With night-vision goggles, a person can see what is around him in the darkness. Walking in darkness in a jungle, in a rain forest at night is a frightening experience with all the sounds of the jungle. But, if we were wearing night-vision goggles, it would more likely be a terrifying experience to see all of the creatures out in darkness making all of the jungle noises. We live in the kingdom of darkness. If we had spiritual-vision goggles, we would be able to see what is in the kingdom of darkness. God doesn't want us to see the kingdom of darkness at this time. If we could, we would be terrified from all the host of wickedness which surrounds us. Some are large, some are small, but all are evil and their appearance would be terrifying to us.

Faith is the evidence of things unseen.

Everything we can see... everything that has physical substance is temporary; it will all eventually be destroyed. Everything that exists which we cannot see is eternal.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 2 Cor 4:17

How can we believe in what we cannot see? How can we know it is real?

In a trial, where does evidence come from? Someone sits on the witness stand and testifies. They offer proof of what they have seen or heard. If they have seen that to which they testify, their evidence is the more credible. If they have only heard of something, their evidence is 'hearsay' and not as convincing. Who is giving evidence here? God is the One testifying through His Word. The Holy Spirit is the One Who told all of the writers of the Bible what to write.

When someone takes the witness stand and testifies, the jury must determine whether or not he is a credible witness... whether or not they should believe his testimony. One lawyer will try to bolster his witness's credibility while the other lawyer will try to destroy his credibility.

God, as a testifying witness has proven His unimpeachable credibility through centuries of fulfilled prophecy and the performance of supernatural miracles through His spokesmen... the prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan, through his lies, constantly tries to impeach God's credibility as a witness of the truth.

'And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that testify:<sup>8</sup> the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. <sup>9</sup> If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. <sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:6

The Word of God is God's testimony. If we believe His testimony, He produces faith in our hearts, the faith to believe His testimony even more. Faith in His Word produces more faith. Faith leads to faith.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is **revealed from faith to faith**; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Rom 1:16

The World, the kingdom of darkness which hates the true God of the Bible and His chosen children, teaches its followers to only be interested in what can be seen and heard, tasted, smelled or touched. They are constantly bombarded with the message of, 'live for today, be in the moment, experience the here and now.' They are taught to give no thought beyond now; there is no future, there is no judgment, there will be no price to pay.

God's Word teaches that everything we can see, hear, taste, smell and touch will all pass away; it will all be destroyed. The only things that will last are the unseen things of now and eternity and all that awaits us in the future. There was a great price to be paid, but it was paid by God Himself, for us on the Cross. There is a great Judgment to come but He was judged for us.

**Verse 2: 'For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.'**

What does that mean... by faith, the elders obtained a good testimony. Those of us who grew up in a Baptist Church probably remember Wednesday night prayer meeting, but it wasn't really a prayer meeting... it was like a mini Sunday service. One feature of Wednesday night was 'testimony time.' One or more would get up and 'give their testimony.' 'I used to be really, really bad but now I'm really, really good... praise the Lord!'

Is that what it means here? '***For by it the elders obtained a good testimony***'

No. It's not. Remember... Who is the One testifying? It is God. This is saying, through their faith in God and what He had said, that they had determined God was a truthful witness and could be relied upon... God gave a good testimony regarding each of them. It's talking about God's testimony about them... not their testimony about God or about themselves.

'And he (Abraham) believed the LORD, and He (God) counted it to him as righteousness.' Gen 15:6

Look down at verse 11: 'By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since ***she considered him faithful who had promised.***' She had faith in God's Word.

Abraham had faith in God's promise and God testified concerning Abraham that he was 'righteous.' By faith, Abraham obtained a good testimony from the most reliable testifier... God.

All of these 'heroes of the faith,' all of these Old Testament Saints the writer uses as examples, of having exercised saving faith, for his Hebrew readers... they all had faith in what God had said regarding the future. None of them were hoping to live their best life now.

**Verse 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.'

We know that God created the Earth and all the Universe by just speaking His Word. We know it, by faith, because His Word tells us so. If it weren't for God's Word telling us the truth of how Creation came into being, all we would have are the demonically inspired lies which fill the heads of the unsaved throughout the World.

The writer is telling these Hebrews, 'We know the truth of God's Creation from the Hebrew Scriptures and if the Hebrew Scriptures are true concerning Creation, then they are also true in their prophecies of the coming Hebrew Messiah which were all fulfilled perfectly by the Lord Jesus Christ.'

God's Word produces faith in the hearts of God's elect. The unsaved, those not chosen by God, read His Word and it seems to be only foolishness to them. It says, 'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' 1 Cor 1:18

**Verse 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.'

See what it says in Gen. 4: 'Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." <sup>2</sup> Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. <sup>3</sup> And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

<sup>6</sup> So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup> 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."

<sup>8</sup> 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.

We don't know how Abel knew to bring a blood sacrifice to God. We can assume that he brought the sacrifice because of his sin. Perhaps his parents had told them of how God had killed animals to make clothing for them after they had sinned in the Garden. Perhaps God had told Abel Himself... perhaps Abel 'walked with God,' like Enoch. We know that they understood about sin because God referenced sin with what He said to Cain. We know that God still talked with people.

Abel brought the best he had which was God's own work... God caused the sheep to bare lambs. Cain brought the work of his own hands, his own pride... the fruit of the ground, but the ground had been cursed in the original curse after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. God had said, "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return." Gen 3

God was not pleased with what Cain brought; He was pleased with Abel's sacrifice.

**Verse 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.'

In Genesis it says, ' Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup> After he begot Methuselah, **Enoch walked with God** three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup> So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup> And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him.' Gen 5:21

This verse is even better in the King James. It says, 'By faith Enoch was **translated** that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had **translated** him: for before his **translation** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.'

Enoch was translated; he was changed, he was taken... he was raptured. The Greek word he uses here is *metatithemi*. He used the same word once before in chapter 7: 'For the priesthood being **changed**, there is made of necessity a **change** also of the law.' We learned that the priesthood was completely changed. The natural, Levitical priesthood was changed into the supernatural priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The Law, the Old Covenant was changed into the New. Enoch was changed from the natural and temporal into the supernatural and eternal. At the Rapture, we will be changed from the mortal into the immortal, we shall see Him as He is and like Him; we will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be like Him.

Even though Enoch was 'raptured,' taken from the Earth without having died, the main point here is that he was taken 'by faith.' The clear implication was that God had told him that one day, and he did wait for that day for more than 300 years, but one day God would come for His daily walk with Enoch and He would then take Enoch back to Heaven with Him. Enoch looked for that day, he expected it and he had faith in God's Word. His faith was the substance of that for which he hoped and it was the evidence of what was still unseen.

Why was Enoch 'taken?' Why was he changed, translated, raptured? He was taken because he had a good testimony from God. God's testimony regarding Enoch was, 'he pleased God.'

I want to be taken, changed, translated, raptured. How can I please God so that He will want to take me? How do we please God? Do we please Him by 'being good?' Do we please Him by obeying the Law? The writer of Hebrews has already spent 10 chapters convincing us that no one has ever kept the Law and that the Law was never able to make anyone holy or pleasing to God. Therefore, since the Law was temporary and inferior, it had to be changed; it became the New Covenant, officiated by the new and perfect High Priest.

If we can't be good enough to please God... how do we please God? Look at the very next verse:

**Verse 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.'

True faith, the faith that pleases God is faith in, absolute assurance and confidence in what God has said... and only in what God has said, not in what some false teacher has said that God said. There is great spiritual harlotry filling the Church today. What is a harlot? It is a woman or a man who will do most anything for money. Much of the Church today, much of 'Christian TV' is filled with false teachers and false prophets who will say anything for money. They have discovered that if they teach a false gospel of prosperity, gullible people will pour money into their burgeoning bank accounts. Their followers have faith in what the false teachers have said, but not in what God has said. God never promised His people health or prosperity. In fact, Jesus promised us that we would always have tribulation and that we would be hated by the World.

All of these Old Testament Saints were seeking God... they were not seeking anything of the world. They knew with absolute assurance that God is... that He exists... and that He would reward them as they were faithful to seek Him.

Look what it says of Abraham down in verse 10: 'For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' He wasn't looking for an Earthly city of gold... he was looking forward to God's promise of the New Jerusalem... even before there was an Old Jerusalem. He was looking forward to the Eternal.

Who is the first example he gives: Abel... he wasn't looking for any Earthly reward from God or anyone else because there was nothing. His little family owned the entire world... gold and jewels were nothing more than pretty stones. There was no one to sell them to, there was no money. Abel was seeking God. Cain was not. Cain was looking for praise and adulation what he could do, for what he was able to grow... and those were certainly some very impressive fruits and vegetables back then.

So what if Cain brought the fruit from his garden and Abel brought a lamb from his flock... why was one acceptable and the other not? John wrote, '...not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. 1 John 3:12

What made Abel's works righteous? Abel believed what God said. He believed that God was real and that He rewarded those who seek Him. He believed God and just like Abraham, it was accounted to him as righteousness.

That's what it takes to please God. To believe that He is and to seek Him... to seek to know Him and draw near to Him. He will draw near to the one who pleases Him... to the one who seeks Him.

James wrote, 'Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.' James 4:7

Abel resisted Satan and drew near to God... Cain did not.

Our faith is what pleases God, but only our faith in God and in what He has said. We can only please God by knowing and believing His Word.

When we believe God and His Word, we will receive a good testimony from God.

Too many prefer a good testimony from men and from the World than from God.