

Heb 11:1-7

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Do you ever wonder why God is allowing things to happen as they are in this world?

I think it would be safe to say that most of us here have lived our lives in relative peace.

Going back to chapter 10 for a moment, the author of Hebrews said:

Heb 10:38-39

38 Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

When the author wrote this, he was drawing from the book of Habakkuk 2

- during a time of national crisis.

Judah was filled with injustice,

- violence and spiritual decline.

And Habakkuk asks God a question and that is,

Hab 1:2-4

2 How long, O Lord, must I call for help?

But you do not listen!
 "Violence is everywhere!" I cry,
 but you do not come to save.
 3 Must I forever see these evil deeds?
 Why must I watch all this misery?
 Wherever I look,
 I see destruction and violence.
 I am surrounded by people
 who love to argue and fight.
 4 The law has become paralyzed,
 and there is no justice in the courts.
 The wicked far outnumber the righteous,
 so that justice has become perverted.

Notice God's response:

Hab 1:5-7

5 The Lord replied,

"Look around at the nations;
 look and be amazed!
 For I am doing something in your own day,
 something you wouldn't believe
 even if someone told you about it.
 6 I am raising up the Babylonians,
 a cruel and violent people.
 They will march across the world
 and conquer other lands.
 7 They are notorious for their cruelty
 and do whatever they like.

Notice verse 5:

5 The Lord replied,

"Look around at the nations;
 look and be amazed!
 For I am doing something in your own day,
 something you wouldn't believe
 even if someone told you about it.

God's word remains relevant in every generation.

Paul quoted Habakkuk verse 5 in Acts 13 when warning those rejecting Christ:

Acts 13:40-41

40 Be careful! Don't let the prophets' words apply to you. For they said,
 41 'Look, you mockers,
 be amazed and die!

For I am doing something in your own day,
something you wouldn't believe
even if someone told you about it."

There is still an ongoing spiritual warning today.

Unfortunately, many people today dismiss God's work thru unbelief.

As we jump into the third division of Hebrews

- we'll see examples of faith.

In chapter 12, believers are encouraged

- to run with endurance

And finally in chapter 13 we'll read about faith's evidences.

Heb 11:1

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

- What is faith? Faith is trusting God.

Faith is not the absence of questions,

- it's choosing to trust God
- after bringing those questions to Him.

As we look at verse 1 we'll notice two key words,

- "substance and evidence."

Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

The New American Standard calls it "assurance" and

- the NLT calls it "confidence."

The Greek word is "hypostasis."

It can mean:

- assurance
- foundation
- underlying reality
- title deed

Some scholars describe this as the title deed of something you do not yet possess.

Faith treats God's future promises as present realities.

The Hebrew believers were tempted to abandon their future promises for immediate relief.

Don't put your confidence in man.

Interestingly, Psa 118:8 is often noted as the center of the bible:

Ps 118:8

8 It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.

The author said earlier in chapter 3,

Heb 3:14

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

This isn't "if" as in a possibility but it's for greater emphasis and means "since indeed."

The confidence we hold on to is in Christ alone.

Faith is not a feeling.

It's dangerous when we make decisions based on emotions

- because we tend to react to situations.

I mentioned Elijah during our last study.

One moment he felt as though nothing could touch him,

- and the next moment
- his emotions caused fear.

His fear temporarily overshadowed his faith

That happens when a person takes his eyes off of Christ.

The author says, "faith is the substance of things hoped for."

As believers our hope is in Christ, our hope is in His resurrection

Faith is not only the substance of things hoped for,

- but the evidence of things not seen.

However, the faith spoken of in Hebrews was demonstrated

- before God's promises were fulfilled.

Someone once said of biblical faith in God and in His word,

It is a solid conviction resting on God's word that makes the future present and the invisible seen.

Verse 1, faith is the evidence of things not seen.

"Evidence" is conviction, proof or the inner certainty produced by evidence.

Strongs dictionary defines it as "convicting evidence."

Heb 11:3

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,

Faith isn't just believing, it's taking action.

Listen, it's the kind of faith seen in verse one that changes lives.

It's that same faith which keeps us going,

- keeps us motivated when we feel like giving up.

The second element of faith is in the second verse.

- It's faith's witness.

Heb 11:2

2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

When people look at you can they say you are a good testimony.

That boils down to being a person of integrity.

Elijah's name itself carried a bold testimony because

- Baalism was popular worship.

The name Elijah means "Jehovah is God."

"Eli" means God, and "jah" means Jehovah.

- The issue in Elijah's day was, "who is God?"
- Is it the Lord or is it Baal?

And failing to worship Baal was often met with imprisonment

Wherever Elijah went, people were aware of him

- and were reminded by his name
- that Jehovah was God.

Heb 11:3

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.

The point here is about how reality works. Before creation existed,

- nothing visible was there.

God, whom we cannot see, spoke and the universe came into existence.

- Therefore, the invisible world
- depends on an unseen source.

When a house is being built, you see the structure. You see the finished product.

What you don't see is the blueprint that existed before the house.

- The plan we don't see
- is what produced the visible structure.

The unseen is not imaginary, it's foundational.

It's only by God's record of creation

- that we can understand that He Himself
- is responsible for creating the universe.

The author says, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."

Interestingly, the word "world" appears about 60 times in the NT

- but only twice does it carry
- the meaning as it does here.

The other time is in Hebrews 1:2

Heb 1:2

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Jesus is not part of creation - He is the creator!

John 1:1-3

1 In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

To the Colossians Paul said:

Col 1:16-17

16 For by Him all things were created (notice the prepositions in this verses, "by Him" meaning that Jesus is the agent) that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and

invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him (prep - Jesus is the means) and for Him (prep - He is the purpose).

Everything is included in this verse. The heavens and the earth, everything visible and invisible as well as rulers and authorities.

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

NLT

Col 1:17

17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

Not only did Jesus create it all, but He holds it together.

Prepositions can change the meaning of a verse,

- so it's important to take note of them.

A preposition answers questions like:

- Who is the source?
- What is the means?
- What is the purpose?
- Who receives the action?

Eph 2:8

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith,

We've been saved "by grace" That's the source of salvation.

It's through faith, that's the means by which we receive it.

So it's the grace which saves and it's the faith which receives.

Heb chapter 10, the just shall live by faith.

We've heard the expression, "prove it!"

We see the proof in chapter 11.

Our faith is measured by trust and obedience, not by results.

So the author is saying to the Hebrews that were considering shrinking back under pressure,

The same means that sustained believers before you which is "faith"

- will sustain you now.

As we move ahead, notice the progression of what faith looks like in the life of a believer.

It goes from worship, to walking, to working.

Verse 4 shows that it was by faith that Abel offered.

- That's his worship.

In verse 5 we'll see that Enoch walked with God.

Then as we'll see, Noah moved with godly fear.

- He worked. His faith became action.

So, you first come to God in worship, thankful to Him for saving you.

Then you begin your journey with God by walking with Him.

Then He sends you out to work for His kingdom by faith!

Heb 11:4

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.

Abel (a shepherd with flocks)

Cain (a farmer growing vegetables)

They were raised in the same family,

- but were different in many ways.

Cain and Abel had the same upbringing, same religion,

- yet one believed, the other didn't.
- One had faith in God while the other didn't.

A person may show signs of being a believer, but inwardly they haven't surrendered to Christ.

Faith begins by how we approach God.

- It's one thing to acknowledge that He exists,
- but it's another to trust and obey Him.

Cain had an opportunity to repent but he chose not to.

Gen 4:6-7

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."

Cain was obviously angry, so God asked two questions, Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen?

God left room for Cain to repent.

- "If you do well, will you not be accepted?"

God was giving him both a chance and a warning

- before his sin became worse.

He then told Cain, if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.

Cain had a choice, and he's told, "but you should rule over it."

In verse 4 of Hebrews, it's implied that Abel acted by faith whereas Cain did not.

"by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

In Gen 4, Abel trusted God's way rather than his own way by bringing the very best of his flock.

The text in Gen 4:3 does not say Cain brought the *firstfruits*, only that he brought "an offering of the fruit of the ground."

Now, I don't want you to miss what is said in Genesis regarding the offering and the person.

Gen 4:4b

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.

Notice the order. First the person then the offering.

The problem wasn't the offering itself, but the heart attitude of Cain.

Genesis tells us what happened and Hebrews tells us why it happened.

Hebrews says it was by faith that Abel offered.

How are you approaching God, is it thru humility,

- with an attitude of worship,
- with a heart trusting God.