

Hebrews 11:1-7

Hebrews 11 is a pivotal chapter in this letter. The writer has established that Jesus is better than everything else. Many of the Jewish people at this time thought it was the works of the Law that made one right with God. The end of chapter 10 the readers of this letter were challenged to "live by faith" and not "draw back," thus exhibiting spurious faith if they do draw back. In this chapter the writer develops the truth that the only way to please God is through faith. He begins this chapter by telling us what biblical faith is. It is not blind faith, nor is it positive thinking faith. Faith embraces two realities- the word of God and the evidence of it in our lives.

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

There are 2 parts to faith in this verse

a) Basis for faith

"Substance" - υποστασίς - hoop-os'-tas-is

a setting or placing under 1a) thing put under, substructure, foundation 2) that which has foundation, is firm 2a) that which has actual existence 2a1) a substance, real being 2b) the substantial quality, nature, of a person or thing 2c) the steadfastness of mind, firmness, courage, resolution 2c1) confidence, firm trust, assurance

substance could be translated the ground, basis, foundation, the Greek word used here is also used for "title-deed"; a title-deed is yours, it states that it belongs to you

What then, is that title deed or foundation of faith?

Romans 10:17 says "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"

"things hoped for" - are things we are assured of; these are not maybe's

b) The evidence of faith

"evidence" - the evidence in your life, the conviction in your life; acting out your faith in your life; if your faith is real, there will be a resulting change in your life, even if you haven't seen the end result (no matter what the circumstances)

"things not seen" - promises God has given us: heavenly home, rewards for believers at the judgement seat of Christ (if we believe God will reward us, we will live in light of that promise)

These 2 parts to faith, basing it on scripture (God's Word), and living in light of it, are the basis for understanding the rest of the chapter.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

"it" = faith = evidencing their conviction that God's Word would come to pass

Examples showing this truth:

Matthew 15:21-28 Jesus commended this woman for her great faith.

- 21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.
- 22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.
- 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.
- 24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.
- 26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.
- 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.
- 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilst. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Two obstacles this woman had to overcome:

- disciples rejection in vs. 23
- Jesus rejection in vs. 24, 26

2 clues why she was commended for her great faith

- vs. 22 - "thou Son of David" is a messianic term. She knew He was the Messiah. How? The only way she could have known this was through the Word of God, through the O.T. prophecies. Somehow she knew the O.T. teachings.
- vs. 25 - she worshiped Jesus.

Elijah - James 5:16,17

- 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months

Elijah's prayer was based on Deuteronomy 11:13-17

- 13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,
14 That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.
15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.
16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;
17 And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Matthew 17:17-20

- 17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.
18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.
19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Jesus called his disciples "faithless" because they could not heal the man's son; Jesus said they were unable to heal the boy because of their unbelief. Matthew 10:1 records that Jesus had given them the power to heal this type of sickness.

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

They really didn't believe what Jesus told them (they didn't believe the word of God).

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.

Through the Word of God (Genesis 1:1 - "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.") we understand how the universe came into existence - through creation, not evolution.

God spoke and the world came into existence.

"things which are seen" - creation

"things which are [not] visible" - *ex nihilo* - meaning God created everything out of nothing.

In the next verses, we have examples of those who lived in light of God's Word.

- 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.**

Faith begins with salvation

Abel - this example shows us faith in salvation - Genesis 4:3,4

- 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

Abel believed the word of God and offered a sacrifice based on blood and not his own efforts.

"being dead yet speaks" - he affected others because of his believing; acting on God's Word will affect others.

- 5 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.**

Faith continues with our obedient walk with the Lord

Enoch - this example shows us faith in our walk with God - Genesis 5:21-24; Jude 14

- 21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:
22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:
23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:
24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Jude 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

Enoch believed the word of God and evidenced that belief in his "walk with God"

- 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

- a) Must have faith (live based on God's Word)
b) Must believe God is!

This **is not** believing there is a "sugar daddy in the sky;" nor, a general statement that there is a God; nor, a belief in a supreme being of a religion or your imagination.

This **is** believing what the Bible says about God: He is just, holy, righteous, faithful, true, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, the only God, who has a Son Who is the only Savior, etc.

- c) Must believe that God will reward you
d) Must diligently seek him

- 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.**

Faith obeys God in sharing Him with those who are not saved

Noah - this example shows us faith at work in our witness - Genesis 6-9

God gave Noah His word - Noah acted on it though he'd never seen rain - he was in the middle of the desert.

2 Peter 2:5 tells us Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

"And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;"

FAITH IS:

BASED ON WHAT THE WORD OF GOD SAYS.

EVIDENCING WHAT YOU SAY BY THE WAY YOU RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD.