

~Hebrews~

Lesson 23 – What is Faith

As we begin chapter 11, “the hall of faith”, I want to take some time to discuss what faith is and how it operates. This word can mean a lot of different things to different people, so I want to define faith from the Word of God and get a Biblical meaning in our hearts before we move forward.

Today we will be using the first verse of chapter 11 as our text and also using a lot of other Scripture to help define this word.

- I have separated the word “Faith” into 3 categories:
 1. The Description of faith
 - a. In its basic form, what is faith
 2. The Function of faith
 - a. How it works with the system and predestined plan of God in Jesus
 3. The Action of faith
 - a. How to put faith to work in your life

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This entire book of Hebrews has been about admonishing the Hebrew Christians to endure the sufferings of being a Christian by choosing Jesus and not going back under the Law, knowing that we have a better and enduring possession in heaven.

The Description of Faith

To gain this concept of faith, we need to read into chapter 11 starting with verse 35 from the previous chapter.

- Paul is reminding the Hebrew Christians to continually keep their focus on Jesus which is the eternal reward
- In which he goes on to explain that it is by faith that we apprehend this promise.

Hebrews 10:35, 36 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**:

Hebrews 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.

Notice the foundation Paul is laying leading up to his definition of faith.

- Confidence = great reward
- Endurance = receive the promise
- Live by faith = saving of the soul

Note that these are all future concepts and they are unseen. Keep that in mind as we continue.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...

- Substance is the Greek word - *ὑπόστασις* – literally standing under, essence, foundation, underlying, and sure footing
 - This is not a material “substance” like we are used to hearing. This is sub-stance, foundation, underlying, sure footing.
 - It is usually translated as confidence in the King James, Heb 3:14.
 - It is what we put our hope on.
 - What we are standing on.
- “Of things hoped for” is one Greek word- *ἐπιζομένων*
 - However “things” is not even in the Greek
 - These two words, “substance and things” confuses people into thinking that faith magically materializes “things”

- **Faith is the foundation of that which is being hoped for**
 - Hope without the foundation of faith is a wish, but hope standing on faith is spiritual reality
 - Faith is the foundation of hope. It is what hope stands on.
 - Christian hope is built and stands on principles of faith.
 - Our hope is Jesus, 1 Tim 1:1, Titus 2:13.

Hebrews 11:1 ... the evidence of things not seen.

- Evidence is the Greek word - ἐλεγχος – “evidence” is probably the single most accurate translation. It is the proof after being tried, **a convicting proof**, a reproving. It is to expose and make apparent.
 - This word is used as a noun in only one other instance in the New Testament, 2 Tim 3:16 Scripture is profitable for ...reproof, but we find it in several places as a verb.
 - John 8:9- **convicted** by their conscience
 - 1 Cor 14:24- he is **convinced** by all
 - Rev 3:19- as many as I love I **rebuke**
 - John 3:20- deeds should be **exposed**
 - I think “convicting proof” is the best translation for this word
 - So what is the convicting proof of?
 - It is of the things not seen.
 - The word things is not really things. It is sense of matters of the heart or matters of business.
 - It is associated with a work done or a transaction completed
 - Lk 1:1 **things** which have been fulfilled
 - James 3:16 confusion and every evil **thing**
 - Matt 18:19 concerning **anything** that they ask
 - Rom 16:2 assist her in whatever **business**

Faith is the convicting proof of a work done or a transaction accomplished that is not seen

A proving in our hearts of a work done that isn't seen

- So what is a work done or transaction accomplished that is not seen, but yet has an absolutely convicting subject?
- It has to be Jesus Christ and His work on the cross giving us an eternal reward and inheritance!
- Specifically, when Jesus presented His blood in the Holy of Holies as the High Priest of God offering the final sacrifice for sin, Heb 9:11-12
 - The Hebrew Christians were used to “seeing” the sacrifices of the Law
 - Now we have an “unseen” sacrifice that is able to cleanse sin forever.
 - This is the “things” not seen. An unseen work that is producing in us eternal redemption.
 - This redemptive work of Jesus convicted in our hearts (faith), now gives us an opportunity to obtain other “unseen” things, such as
 - Grace
 - Glory
 - Blessings
 - Eternal inheritance and rewards
 - Our hope is a future hope standing on faith looking to Jesus and our eternal joy of being in Him and with Him FOREVER!
 - These eternal, unseen rewards is what Paul has been building for the last 10 chapters, Heb 3:6, 14; 4:3; 5:9; 6:12, 18, 7:19, 24; 8:6; 9:12, 15; 10:23, 34, 35, 36.
- Let us now read verse 1 with this new way of thinking:

Now faith is the foundation of that which is being hoped for; the convicting proof of an accomplished work not physically seen.

Heb 11:1

The eternal, future, unseen kingdom of God is greater than this physical realm we now see.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ 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 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, **not by sight.**

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”

1 Peter 1:8 Whom having **not seen** you love. Though **now you do not see Him,** yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

- Our hope in Jesus stands firm on Him and the efficacious, unseen work of our Savior. Looking to an unseen eternal inheritance given to us by grace through faith that will not fade away.

1 Peter 1:3-5 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to **an inheritance incorruptible** and **undefiled** and that **does not fade away,** reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God **through faith for salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

- Now for the next 39 verses, Paul is displaying the testimony concerning the faith of the elders
 - There are some absolutely stunning exploits of faith mentioned
 - These verses all have one thing in common.
 - Hope in Jesus and the eternal inheritance we have in Him.
 - The main point of this chapter is not to get something to “materialize” in this physical world.
 - We learned that from verse 1.
 - Faith is not a power that makes something magically appear

**Faith is the foundation of that which is being hoped for;
the convicting proof of an accomplished work
not physically seen.**

Heb 11:1

- Manifestation can be a bi-product of hope, but it ought not be our hope.
- Jesus is our hope standing on faith, 1 Tim 1:1, Titus 2:13.

Matthew 6:33 But **seek first the kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- Some people get so wrapped up in the thing they are praying for that they make temporal things their hope.
 - Our hope needs to be in Jesus and nothing else.
- I am not saying it is wrong to pray for things, in fact He tells us “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known to Him, Phil 4:6-7,
 - **but let not our requests become our hope.**
- Every occurrence in the next 39 verses is all about hope in the Messiah and the eternal righteousness of having faith in Him.
 - We need to be so satisfied in Jesus that He becomes our primary focus.
 - To be so consumed with Him that we always choose Him
 - That is the mindset we need to have going into chapter 11.

Hebrews 11:24-26 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.**

The Function of Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it (His grace) is the gift of God, ⁹not of works (ἐξ ἔργων – out from works), lest anyone should boast.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is **of faith** (ἐκ πίστεως – out from faith) that it might be **according to grace**, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed...

- Faith is not based on our works, only on the work of Jesus on the cross.
 - If it was based on works, then it could not be by grace.
 - Grace is a free gift and will not be given out based on meritorious works.
 - It is only through faith that we can apprehend the free gift of grace.
 - Faith is the connecting agent to God
 - Faith is the requirement for righteousness
- Consider faith as **an avenue to God's grace**;
 - Faith has been and will always be the foundation of hope and the link to God's grace
- Faith in the Messiah is not just a New Covenant principle.
 - **Faith was established before the foundation of the world**,
 - It was predestined for a future administration in the resurrected Jesus.
 - Since the beginning, faith in the Messiah has always been the requirement for righteousness
 - God even promised the Messiah to Adam and Eve, Gen 3:15.
 - Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, Gal 3:6
 - However, the fulfilled promise of Salvation could not be completed until Jesus died and rose again, Heb 12:2.
 - This is why Paul said. “these all died in faith, not having received the promise.”, Heb 11:13.
 - The promise was completed when Jesus finished His work on the cross and rose from the dead to administer His blood in the Holy of Holies not made with hands, Heb 9:11-12.
 - This is the finishing act of salvation and the leading of the sons to glory, Heb 2:10
 - Jesus is now the author and finisher (the completer of our faith), Heb 12:2.
 - These Old Testament saints were preserved in Hades, being set aside in Abraham's Bosom and resurrected with Jesus into heaven, Eph 4:8.
 - But now Jesus has provided something better for us.
 - Having completed our faith through His work on the cross, our faith instantly connects us with God's grace,
 - not only when we die,
 - but right now as soon as we give our life to Him, Heb 11:40.
- We are now in the dispensation of the New Covenant.
 - The New Covenant is being administered by our resurrected Savior and High Priest Jesus Christ.
 - When we believe God, we are not only accounted righteous as something yet future, but our spirit is instantly born again as a child of God.

Romans 5:1-2 ¹ Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, (ἐκ πίστεως - out from faith) we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also **we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore **come boldly to the throne of grace...**

The Action of Faith

The act of faith is believing. Believing is acting in faith.

- Paul tells us- “The just shall live by faith (ἐκ πίστεως - out from faith)”, Heb 10:35
 - The Greek says - ἐκ πίστεως – meaning “out from” faith, not “by” faith.
 - This gives us a deeper meaning to standing our hope on the foundation of faith.
 - We need to be living “out from” faith
 - Our hope needs to be rooted deep in faith, and our life will grow “out from” faith.

To make this even more clear, the Greek verb for believing comes from the root word faith.

- Faith = πίστις
- Believe = πιστεύω
 - in English, instead of believing, we might say that we are “faith-ing”

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those **who believe** to the saving of the soul.

Romans 3:21-22 ²¹ But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, **through faith** in Jesus Christ, **to all and on all who believe...**

Romans 4:20-22 ²⁰ He did **not waver** at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and **being fully convinced** that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²² And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

- This is the action of faith. It is our belief and trust in Him.
 - To be fully persuaded that what He has promised, He will do.
 - This ties back to the definition of faith
 - Objectively faith is a convicting proof of the unseen work of Jesus
 - Subjectively we are fully persuaded in His promise unto eternal glory
- We who believe are those who are acting in faith.

Psalm 37:4-5 ⁴ **Delight** yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ **Commit** your way to the LORD, **Trust** also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

The remainder of chapter 11 are examples of actions of faith; not seeking the temporal fleeting pleasures of this world, but rather the eternal inheritance of knowing and being with Jesus
FOREVER.