



**“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).**

## **Faith**

**Central Truth:** Faith denotes a believing commitment that leads to obedience.

**L409. Date:** October 1989. **Text:** Hebrews 11:1-10. **Topic:** Faith.

Faith is the heartbeat of the Christian religion. We who are Christians say we “believe in Christ” and are called “believers.” The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to lead people to believe in Him. One can no more be a Christian without faith than he could live without a heartbeat.

We are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We live by faith (Romans 1:17). We please God through faith (Hebrews 11:6). We gain victory over the evil world system by faith (I John 5:4). The whole Christian life is “from faith to faith” — begun and continued by faith (Romans 1:17).

But distinguish between Bible references to “faith” and “the faith.” The former means a personal trust in God, while the latter refers to a system of doctrine. One can accept a doctrinal statement expressing the Christian religion and not have personal trust in Jesus Christ. But one who trusts Jesus must learn and hold to the doctrines relating to Him.

It is appropriate for a Christian to increase his faith by prayer (Luke 17:5) and Bible study (Romans 10:17). The more he believes, the more he will grow in grace and the more effective he will become as a servant of the Lord Jesus. The truth of this study states, “Faith denotes a believing commitment that leads to obedience.” May that be the result of your study of this subject.

### **I. THE DEFINITION OF FAITH (Hebrews 11:1)**

How would you define *faith*? Some think it to be anti-intellectual, the

opposite of knowing. They say, “I go as far as I can understand and follow blind faith from there on.” Not so! Faith is not blind; it is not the opposite of knowledge. On the contrary, faith is based on knowledge (Romans 10:17). Speculation or self-deception is not faith. Faith is not “a leap into the dark,” as someone called it, but rather “a leap into the light.”

Hebrews 11:1 reads, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* What does that mean? We might say, “Faith is being sure of things we hope for, and being certain of realities we do not see.” That's it! Faith is certainty concerning the unseen realities.

God is not seen. Yet when we believe Him, obey Him, and trust Him for the fulfillment of His promises, we show that we are certain of realities we do not see. We do not see Jesus or His atoning deed in death and resurrection, but we are so certain of them that we stake the destiny of our immortal souls on Him. That shows that we are certain of realities we do not see. Faith is our commitment of confident trust in God to do all He has promised to do and to be all He has said He is.

Faith is more than belief of a doctrine. It is confidence in a person. We believe doctrines taught about Jesus. But we are not saved by believing doctrines. We are saved when we trust Him. The doctrines are the foundation of our faith, but Jesus is its object.

Faith is the confident assurance of that for which we hope and of those realities which are now unseen.

## **II. THE DEMAND FOR FAITH (Hebrews 11:6)**

**A. Faith is necessary to approach God.** Hebrews 11:6 is very clear in saying, *“he that cometh to God must believe that he is.”* There is no approach to God apart from faith. One must believe (1) in the existence of the God whom he would approach and (2) in the willingness of God to meet the one who seeks Him. Anything less than that closes hard and fast the door to God. God has told us that He is and that He delights to meet with us. He who does not believe that makes God a liar (I John 5:10). How could he possibly come to God while denying Him? He cannot. Faith is necessary for one to approach God.

**B. Faith is necessary to receive salvation from God.** Read John 3:14-18 very carefully. It is Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus on how a person can be born again. The word “believe” is used five times in those five verses. Each time believing is related to receiving eternal life and being free from condemnation. Jesus declared that anyone who (1) hears the gospel message and (2) believes on God who sent the Savior has everlasting life and has

already escaped condemnation (John 5:24). He who does not hear, or who hears and does not believe, has no life and is already condemned. We are justified by faith on our part and grace on God's part (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8). Only he who trusts Jesus can be saved.

**C. Faith is necessary to live in fellowship with God.** Four times the Bible says, *“The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:17; see also Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Like Moses who followed the way of righteousness as if he could see Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27), the Christian lives with a certainty that the unseen is real. Remember that *“without faith it is impossible to please (God)”* (Hebrews 11:6).

He who lives in faith will overcome the influences of the unregenerate world system in which he lives (I John 5:4). He will find God directing his life in day-to-day affairs (Proverbs 3:5, 6). He will find fellowship with God a daily delight rather than an occasional wonder.

Yes, God demands our faith. Without it we are limited to what we can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. By none of those five senses can we truly know Him or enter into the good of what He has done for us in Jesus. Therefore, *“without faith it is impossible to please him”* (Hebrews 11:6). Flee from doubt. Cultivate your trust in Him. Be certain of realities you do not see.

### **III. THE DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH (Hebrews 11:4-20)**

Hebrews 11 has been called “God's Hall of Fame of Faith.” There you find a list of men and women who were certain of realities they did not see and triumphed gloriously as a consequence. The chapter is not a sermon on faith but a series of snapshots showing how faith is valid in all situations of life.

After a definition of faith (verse 1), the chapter speaks of the testimony of faith through all generations (verse 2). It relates faith to an understanding of creation (verse 3), to the exercise of worship (verse 4), and to fellowship with God (verses 5, 6). Pointing out the danger of no faith (verse 6), it shows how faith works in tragedy (verse 7), in choosing life's vocation (verses 8-10), and in claiming God's promises (verses 11, 12). The life-changing power of faith is noted (verses 13-16) in view of life's testings (verses 17-19). The faithfulness of God (verses 20-22) leads one to trust his child to God (verse 23) and to walk through all of life by faith (verses 24-26). Faith in times of disappointment (verse 27) leads to salvation by faith (verse 28) and trusting God for deliverance (verse 29). A testimony to salvation by faith (verse 31) leads to a listing of men and women who lived

by faith (verse 32) and did great exploits for God (verses 32-34). The endurance of faith through trials (verses 35-38) was made possible by the promises which faith claims (verses 39-40).

What a demonstration of faith! It is possible in both men and women. It is possible in all generations and locations. It is possible in all circumstances. It is possible in all degrees of spiritual enlightenment and maturity. It is possible for you and me. Amazing, isn't it?

Can your family and friends see a demonstration of your faith in your daily walk, your worship, your tragedy, your profession, your disappointment, and your victory? Can they see it in your home, your church, and your personal spiritual battles? Can they see you persisting in believing when the only foundation for your faith is God himself? Do they see you living by faith? What an opportunity you have to show the reality of knowing God through Jesus Christ as you live by faith. *"Without faith it is impossible to please him."*

#### IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH

Since faith is so essential and effective, we must develop our faith. As a lover's devotion to his beloved grows as he knows her better and is with her more, so the Christian's faith in God should increase as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). How can you develop your faith in God?

**A. Feed your faith.** Feed it on the truth of Holy Scripture. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). That means that the more a person knows what God has said in the Bible the greater foundation he has for faith in God. Bible study and meditation are to a growing faith what food and water are to a growing body. Feed your spirit on the wholesome food of the Word of God. Learn to say with the psalmist, *"In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust"* (Psalm 56:4). The strength of your faith will be in direct proportion to your Spirit-led understanding of Holy Scripture. Be a faithful student of the Bible. Feed your faith on the Word of God.

**B. Exercise your faith.** As the muscles grow by exercise, so faith grows when it is employed. Trust with all your power to trust. Thank God for those situations which require you to trust Him in areas where you have not trusted Him before. If you feel your faith is not sufficient, do not give up in dismay. Pray the words of another whose faith was challenged: *"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"* (Mark 9:24).

**C. Affirm your faith.** Remember the faithfulness of God. Recall the

testimonies of believers who found Him sufficient. Repent of the sinfulness of doubt, knowing that a sinful heart of unbelief makes one depart from God. Repeat your own testimony of faith and confirm your conviction.

The devil will cause doubts to arise. Meet those doubts with such affirmations of faith as, “God is faithful; I do trust Him; He will not fail: He is my Father and is committed to care for me.” Believe and say so! If you relate a verse of Scripture to statements like that, you will find your faith growing stronger and stronger. Speaking your faith will assure you and encourage others to believe.

**D. Share your faith.** Faith grows by declaring it. Time and again, in all situations of life, testify to others of the benefits and safety of trusting God. Declare as the apostle Paul did in a terrible storm at sea, *“I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me”* (Acts 27:25). Sharing your faith and seeing another person trust God will be one of the greatest blessings you can experience. Do it!

Take the spelling of the word *FAITH*. Make a sentence with each word beginning with a consecutive letter of that spelling. Let faith be declared in this way: “Forsaking All I Trust Him.” That is faith: the transfer of all confidence from every other person or thing and settling it in God alone. Trust Him totally and you will have no reason to regret it. Believe on Him as the foundation of your life. Believe in Him as the entrance into life. But above all, believe HIM!

## Questions

1. Why is faith so essential to the Christian religion?
2. What is the difference between “faith” and “the faith”?
3. How would you express Hebrews 11:1 in daily language?
4. What is your definition of faith?
5. Why does God demand faith if we would approach Him?
6. Explain the statement, “By grace are ye saved through faith.”
7. Explain the statement, “The just shall live by faith.”
8. How does Hebrews 11 show that faith is effective in all conditions?
9. How can you strengthen your faith?
10. How will you apply this truth to your own life this week?