

Faith

HEBREWS 11 VERSE 1

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

INFORMATION

This verse is often quoted by pastors, teachers and others, and is used to explain what faith is. In some ways the King James Version of the Bible presents this verse cryptically. So, we look at the English Standard Version translation of this verse to help us better understand it. The ESV translation reads “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*” In this case I believe the ESV translation is less ambiguous. Here, we see that faith is a confident, solid hope or belief in something that, as of yet, has not been obtained or seen. Faith is more than mere hope or mere belief; it is a confident hope.

Hebrews chapter 11 is a great testimony of faith. Consider that the book of Hebrews was written to the Jews, not the gentiles. While gentiles can gain great insight into God from this book, we need to keep in mind that the author (perhaps Paul) was writing to the Jews. In this context, we can gain insight. The Jews did not believe in Christ as the savior; in fact, they rejected him as was seen during his crucifixion. Their faith was placed solely in their religious practices as required under the laws that Moses delivered. The author of Hebrews is writing to the Jews to deliver the good news of Jesus Christ, and to show them that the beliefs of the founding fathers of the Jewish nation (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), as well as other key people from their past (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Sara, Moses, Rahab, etc.), were not what they thought. The author shows that these key individuals had faith in the promise that they themselves did not experience. They were all looking for something that was promised, the messiah. The author then tells the Jews that while these predecessors did not experience the things they hoped for, the Jews of his time had.

Chapter 12 builds on chapter 11 by declaring in the opening two verses

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Here we find that Jesus founded and perfected our faith. Our faith begins and ends in Jesus – he is the beginning and the end. Remember this. Elsewhere in the Bible, God declares that he is the Beginning and the End – the Great I AM! Our faith is built on Jesus Christ – his divine nature, virgin birth, his sinless life, his ministry on earth, his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension up to Heaven, to sit on the right hand of the throne of God.

Relevant Passages

Mark 11:22-24

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Luke 17:3-6

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Romans 10:17

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Hebrews 11:6

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.

1 Corinthians 2:5

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Faith (Continued)

MORE INFORMATION

The faith that we are to have is supposed to be alive, not dead. James 2 verse 17 tells us “*So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*” Faith in Jesus should change our behavior, our way of thinking, our way of life, and our actions. Our faith should be evident in our actions. It should encourage quietness and personal acts of faith as well as public acts of faith. It is important that we understand clearly that an inwardly focused faith that changes our private behaviors is as important as an outwardly focused faith.

Private acts of faith include Bible reading, prayer and meditation. Our private actions also include our personal choices, ones we do because of our faith. Many acts will be private and not readily seen by others. God, however, sees the inner person and knows us through and through. He desires a righteous heart, not just righteous acts.

Public acts of faith include attending church services, participating in Christian activities, contributing to charities, helping others and living peacefully with others. Public acts can also include sharing our personal testimony, sharing the Bible with others and much more. A life that is dedicated to faith in Christ Jesus will ultimately include both private and public acts.

NOTE: It is impossible to due full service to the topic of faith in a couple of written pages. Readers should research the topic and gain a more full understanding through the Bible.

WHAT IT MEANS TO OUR FAMILY

Our individual purpose in life is to serve God with all of our hearts, minds and souls. Jesus provided the perfect example of how we should live. Our faith in Jesus should drive our behavior. To properly understand what our behavior should be, we need to study the life and teachings of Jesus and apply them to our lives. We must not forget that our works is not synonymous with our faith, and we do not perform righteous acts to obtain salvation. We practice our religion because our faith in Jesus Christ encourages a righteous and just life. Faith can enable us to accomplish great things and enable us to see the future clearly.

Additional Thoughts

Hebrews chapter 11 is considered by many to be the great treatise on faith. So, here it is repeated for your edification.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, 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 pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. 32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.