

Hebrews 11:1–2

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.

The Nature of Faith
Hebrews 11:1-2

INTRO:

In **2 Corinthians 5** we read an important truth. ***“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*** What is this faith that is the basis of our walk in this present world? The writer to the **Hebrews** described this faith in the first paragraph of **Hebrews 11**.

Life changing faith in the Living God has two aspects.

- I. The Nature of Faith (v. 1)***
- II. The Product of Faith (v.2)***

I. The Nature of Faith (v. 1)

A. In the first place,

v.1 *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for.”*

The word here translated substance can be taken two ways. It can be *“the assurance, substance, or reality”* of things for which we hope. We could also translate it in as the *title deed* to the things upon which we hope.

1. Faith is not believing something we cannot prove. There is plenty of reason to believe. Still, we must believe.

2. Perhaps the best way to see this is to illustrate it. Do you remember what happened to the Children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea? God said, *“There is the promised land. Just go take it.”* Ten of the twelve spies did not have faith. They were unable to lay hold of the promise of God and thus they were unable to experience the blessing. You and I need to learn this principle. Until we can by faith lay hold on the substance of God's promises, we cannot experience the blessing of God.

B. Faith is not only the substance of things hoped for;

“it is also the EVIDENCE of things not seen.” (v.1)

1. This word here is sometimes translated *“conviction”* *“assurance,”* or *“proof.”* It actually gives the idea of putting to the test and proving.

2. The proof of or evidence of something seen is our sight. We cannot prove color because sight is the evidence of that which is seen.

3. In like manner, that which cannot be proven by sight can only be proven by faith. The atheist says, *“Show me your God. I cannot see Him, therefore He does not exist.”* Oh, but He is proven by our faith and that is the evidence or proof in the realm of the unseen. Do you realize how many things we believe but we cannot see? We believe in many things we cannot see. For example we believe in electrons, atoms, bacteria, airplane pilots.

4. Remember Abraham? When Lot took the best and left the rest for Abraham.

Genesis 13:14-15 ***“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are - northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.’”***

Sight did not prove God's promise, faith did.

D. Do you recognize how many times God describes things we cannot see and yet must believe? Remember our friend Elisha in **2 Kings 6**?

2 Kings 6:16 ***“There are more with us than are with them.”***

In **Hebrews 11:27**, Moses persevered ***“as seeing Him who is invisible.”*** The Lord Jesus Himself said in **John 3:3**,

“Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Perhaps my all-time favorite is Paul's statement in **2 Corinthians 4:18**,

“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.”

II. The Product of Faith (v.2)

A. Now that we have discovered what faith is, let us look at what it does in our lives.

“For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.”

How do we know faith is the title deed for the things of which we are certain and the proof of that which we cannot see?

B. It is shown in that through faith, those who have gone before have obtained the witness of God upon their lives. We see the result of faith in their lives, and the evident approval from God. This then is the result of faith.

1. By faith the elders, those who have gone before us in the stream of redemptive history, have received a good report.

2. What good report did these elders receive? Certainly not from the world around them, for some, because of their faith were put in chains and sawn asunder and burned at the stake. No, they received a good report from God.

3. How do we know that God approved of them? Because we are right now standing in the anteroom of one of the monuments that God has erected to their faith, God's great Hall of Faith in Hebrews chapter eleven.

C. Do we desire to receive God's approval? Do we want Him to be well pleased with us? Here is the great prerequisite. We must have faith.

1. We read of this requirement in **Hebrews 11:6** -- Here it is in black and white. God Himself told us through the writer of Hebrews.

“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.”

2. So many today seek to please God with activity and service. We seek to please Him with self-sacrifice and self-denial. Still,

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

D. How do we cultivate faith?

1. The first thing we must do is to recognize the source of faith.

Romans 10:17 ***“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”***

Faith comes from hearing the voice of God in His book.

2. We need to remember that faith is strengthened by exercising it. This is why our Lord gave those tests to His disciples. He will also strengthen our faith by trying it!

3. If we will spend time in fellowship with God in His Word, seek faith from the Lord and seek to be strengthened by the trials in our lives, we will develop faith that will allow us to please God.

Let us then seek to sum up this whole matter.

Faith is important because:

It gives access to the promises of God which will be fulfilled.

It is the proof for the unseen realities.

It allows us to be pleasing to God.

It gives us the ability to understand the reality in which we live.

Let us then ask the Lord to teach us how to live and walk by faith.

Hymn #494 Like a River Glorious