

The Ordo Salutis

The Order of Salvation

A Study

As of: 8/1/2021

Step 8: Faith and Repentance

“No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (**Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 2:12**); and even then, faith is an eye to discern Christ before it is a foot to approach Him.” — **Arthur W. Pink**

“Being persuaded that Christ and his promises are factual is not by itself saving faith. That is why some professing Christians will be shocked at the last day, when they hear him say, 'I never knew you,' even though they protest that he is 'Lord, Lord.' Believing that Christ and his promises are true, based on a testimony, is a necessary part of faith. But it is not sufficient to turn faith into saving faith.”- **John Piper**

“It is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors” — **A.W. Pink**

“There are nine conditions that prove genuine saving faith, 1) Love for God 2) Repentance from Sin 3) Genuine Humility 4) Devotion to God’s Glory 5) Continual Prayer 6) Selfless Love 7) Separation from the World 8) Spiritual Growth 9) Obedience”- **John MacArthur**

“The Roman Catholic church teaches ‘Faith+ Works = Justification’. The Antinomian teaches ‘Faith = Justification – Works’ while the Bible teaches ‘Faith= Justification + Works.’”- **RC Sproul**

“The Bible doesn’t teach us to simply ‘Believe’ as though we could believe in anything. Rather the Bible teaches, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’”- **RC Sproul**

“A sinner can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit's aid than he can create a world.”- **CH Spurgeon**

“There was a day when I died; died to self, my opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren or friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.” – **George Mueller**

“If you have the data and you are persuaded that the information you have is true- is that

enough to save you? No. Because James tells us that believing to that extent qualifies us to be a demon.”- **RC Sproul**

“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”- **the Apostle Paul**

“... faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself... faith without works is useless ... a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” – **James, the Less**

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”- **the writer of Hebrews**

“obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” – **the Apostle Peter**

“The Reformers taught that saving faith has three components (Latin) 1) *Noticia*; 2) *Assensus* 3) *Fiducia*”- **RC Sproul**¹

“The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation.” – **Martin Luther**

“Knowledge without repentance will be but a torch to light men to hell.”- **Thomas Watson**

“Repentance, as we know, is basically not moaning and remorse, but turning and change.” – **JI Packer**

“The vigor and power and comfort of our spiritual life depends on our mortification of deeds of the flesh.”- **John Owen**

“True repentance is no light matter. It is a thorough change of heart about sin, a change showing itself in godly sorrow and humiliation - in heartfelt confession before the throne of grace - in a complete breaking off from sinful habits, and an abiding hatred of all sin. Such repentance is the inseparable companion of saving faith in Christ.” – **JC Ryle**

“Repentance is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of Him; and it consists in the mortification of the flesh and the renewing of the Spirit.”- **John Calvin**

“Some people do not like to hear much of repentance; but I think it is so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit, I would desire to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit I would desire to die practicing it.”- **Matthew Henry**

“Regeneration precedes both Faith and Repentance- making both of them a Gift and a Response”- **RC Sproul**

¹ 1) the Content, Information, or Data of what you are believing; the Object of Faith- Jesus 2) the intellectual affirmation of the Truth of the Information 3) actually trusting in what you say you believe to the point of having an Affection for Jesus

Why Do We Believe?

What is “Faith”? *Why* do we believe? How did Belief and Faith come to you? Is believing simply a Choice or a Decision- or is there more to it? The Issue of Faith is so central to the Christian Message that the Bible refers to Christianity as the “Christian Faith”. And the Bible teaches that Salvation is totally *dependent* on Faith and yet it also tells us that lost people are pre-disposed to NOT believe. So, how is that dilemma resolved? *From where* does Faith come; and *to whom* does Faith come? Does *everybody* already have the ability to believe or is Belief a Gift? And if Faith is a Gift- why does God judge people to whom He has not given it?

As you can see, there are many Questions about Faith. And they all deserve an Answer. And we can thank God- that He has answered all of them in His Word. But we must take heed to ourselves because the Answers may surprise us. And if we are not careful, they may even offend us.

The closest thing we have in the Bible to a definition about just what Faith is- is found in **Hebrews 11:1&6** where the unknown writer of the **Epistle to the Hebrews** was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write:

Hebrews 11:1-3&6

- 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**
- 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.**
- 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.**
- 6 And 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 seek Him.**

Now **Hebrews 11** is NOT merely another part of the Bible. What this writer was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write here has to do with our lives in the 21st Century. Now just a few verses back- in **Hebrews 10:34**- this writer said that some of the Christians of this small Church in what is now called, “Asia Minor” in the last third of the 1st Century (around 68AD) were imprisoned. And the other believers made the hard decision to identify with them and risk their own property and their lives. And verse 34 tells what happened.

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

And this is the kind of life that the entire **Epistle of Hebrews** is trying to produce in us- a life that looks at the high price of Love (like the seizure of our property or some other kind of abuse or calamity as we can read in **Hebrews 13:3-6,13**), and then accepts that possibility- *joyfully*- and does what Love demands- no matter what. That's the “Abundant Life” that **Hebrews** is aiming at: all the glorious Truths about Jesus that we can see in this Epistle such as:

- ✓ Giving Himself once for all as a final Sacrifice for our sins (**Hebrews 9:14**)
- ✓ Perfecting us for all time by a single Offering (**Hebrews 10:14**)
- ✓ Giving us a clean conscience by His Own Blood (**Hebrews 9:14; 10:22**)
- ✓ Being our sympathetic High Priest before God (**Hebrews 4:14-16**)
- ✓ Interceding for us day after day in Heaven (**Hebrews 7:25**)

- ✓ Putting His Laws in our minds and writing them on our hearts and being our God (**Hebrews 8:10**),
- ✓ Remembering our Sins no more (**Hebrews 8:12**),
- ✓ Promising never to leave us or forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5&6**)

And all these great Truths are aimed at making us into this kind of people:

- Who risk property and life in order to bring the Love of God to others.
- Who do not look for comforts and ease and security as a necessary thing in life.
- Who are free from the American assumptions of style and safety and wealth and leisure.
- Who know there is one life to live and only what's done in the Name of Christ and for His Glory and for the eternal good of others will count in the end.

And what **Hebrews 10:34** makes clear is that the way that such a life comes about in our lives is through an unshakable Hope in God that is beyond anything in this life.

(You) accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

And so, the Power to be joyfully sacrificial in the path of Love is "**knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**" beyond the grave. And if we don't live by this great Confidence that is brought about by this great Hope- we will be continually thinking about how much we are losing out every time we make a sacrifice for others. But if this life is a brief preparation for eternal Joy- if in this life you and I can reach a place in Jesus Christ where we understand and know that we have a "**better possession and a lasting one**" in Heaven- then we will be free to risk our lives and our possessions on behalf of others in this world because, as Paul said in **Romans 8:18**:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So, the entire **Book of Hebrews** was written to give us an eternal and abiding Hope that transcends anything that this evil world has to offer. And this abiding Hope is the Foundation of a Life of radical, risk-taking, and sacrificial Love.

What more could the writer say than he has already said to help us have this Hope so that we live out this radical Love? The writer has surely written plenty- but he isn't finished. And now he writes Chapter 11 to give us even more:

In **Hebrews 11**- the writer gives us several real- life examples of real people who actually laid hold on the future reward of Joy with God to such an extent that it not only revolutionized their lives then- but it also makes a great difference in our lives 21 centuries later if we would believe.

That's what **Chapter 11** is all about. It is meant to deepen our Confidence in God's Promises to the extent that we will turn from the fleeting pleasures of Sin and live out the radical kind of Love that comes from having our Hope in God.

Now like all things that are true about God- the writer of **Hebrews** was not the only one who understood this. The Apostle Paul also wrote about what this great Hope would produce is those who had it- so let's read what he wrote about this by looking at **Colossians 1:4&5**:

**4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;
5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel**

Now notice here that verse 5 begins with the word, "**Because**", which also means "**for**" or "**due to**". So, what Paul is saying here is that "**because**" or "**due to**" the fact that the people of the Church at Colosse had laid hold on this great Hope in Heaven- they were able and willing to exercise their Faith and Love toward the people who were struggling against Sin and Persecution.

And what was it that built up that kind of Faith that promoted this kind of sacrificial Love and Good Works? Paul tells us here that the people of this Church had heard the Word of God preached through the Gospel even as you and I are hearing it right this minute.

Romans 10:17

...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

So, hearing about the great and mighty Promises of God that God has made to us through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and believing that those great and mighty Promises are true- *emboldens* us to take hold of this great transcendent Hope. And it is this Hope that brings about radical, risk taking, and sacrificial Love.

So, **Hebrews 11** begins with a definition of Faith that links it with Hope and then goes on to show how this Hope gave Power for all kinds of radical Obedience by people all throughout the Bible. So, I want to read **Hebrews 11:1-3** again together:

1 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

So, the first very important thing that we can do today is to forget all the nonsense that we have been taught about what Faith is; and what Faith does; and look at what God's Word says about Faith- so that we may lay hold on eternal Life.

The writer of **Hebrews** is telling us by these inspired and inerrant and infallible Words that the Power to sacrifice in the Cause of Love; and the Power to joyfully accept the seizure of our property- and even the loss of our lives, which we saw in **Hebrews 10:34**, is something that the Holy Spirit calls "Faith."

That is what Faith is- the Power to willingly and joyfully and sacrificially accept the seizure of our property and even the loss of our lives because we *know*- we don't guess or wonder- we *know* through the hearing of the Word of God preached about the great and mighty Promises of God and we believe that God's Word is true and that hearing mixed with believing produces a great and enduring Hope in us that we have an abiding and a lasting Possession in

Heaven- that God gave to us; that cannot be altered; and that cannot be diminished; and that cannot ever be taken away from us. And this Hope *emboldens* us to act with a radical Love that the world does not know; and that the world does not possess.

The writer says here in **Hebrews 11:1** that Faith is the “**assurance of things hoped for**” - that word, “**assurance**”- remember that word? It is the very *same* word that he used back in **Hebrews 10:34** to tell us about a “Possession” in Heaven that was both “better” than anything else on this earth and “better” than anything that was promised under the Old Covenant; and it was also “lasting”- meaning that it is eternal. This is what the song writer meant when he said,

“I have a home in Glory Land that outshines the Sun”

So, the writer tells us here in **Hebrews 11:1** that Faith is the Confidence that “**you have a better possession and a lasting one**” or in other words, Faith is the Confidence that we believe that what God’s Word promises us in Heaven is a far better and a far more abiding Possession than anything that this earth could ever hope to give.

Now there's the link between the Life of the sacrificial kind of Love that **Hebrews 10:34** describes and the Hall of Fame in Chapter 11. Chapter 11 is a catalogue of people who illustrate that this kind of Faith - the “Assurance” or the “Confidence” of things hoped for - really *does* make a difference in human lives.

So, the first task that we have in this new chapter is to understand more exactly what Faith is. That's what verse 1 gives us - a *twofold* definition of Faith. So, let's look at both parts, one at a time. The Holy Spirit moved upon the writer to write that Faith is:

1. The Assurance of things hoped for
2. The Conviction of things not seen.

Now there is more here than meets the eye at first. The Greek word for “**assurance**” in the first definition (“**the assurance of things hoped for**”) and the word for “**conviction**” in the second definition (“**the conviction of things not seen**”), are very unusual Greek words that are very difficult to translate into English. But if we are to understand what the writer is telling us- we are going to have to struggle with this for a moment.

These two words “**assurance**” and “**conviction**” are, in fact, very serious and important translations. And the importance is not merely academic. So, in order to see just how important all of this is just ask yourself these four simple questions:

1. Do you have Faith?
2. How do you *know* that you have Faith?
3. What exactly *is* Faith- so that you may know if you have it?
4. What hangs in the balance on whether you have Faith or not?

So, we can see that these Questions are *very* practical and *very* relevant to our lives. So, let's get into this and I want to start with the *second* definition of Faith that the writer of **Hebrews** describes for us first:

Faith is the conviction of things not seen."

Now the Greek word that was translated here as, "**conviction**" in **Hebrews 11:1**- is not used anywhere else in the entire New Testament. But *outside* the New Testament- in other ancient Greek literature, the normal use of this word throughout the world back in the 1st Century would be to talk about "Proof" or "Argument" or "Conviction" - something that is very objective. In other words, this Greek word would have to do with objective facts about how the world really is- rather than how a person might subjectively *feel* about the world. And that is how this particular Greek word would have normally been used in literature other than the Bible.

So, what about the meaning here in verse 1? Most modern translations of the Bible don't use the old word, "Proof" or "Evidence" like the KJV does because it doesn't seem to make sense to them. How can Faith *be* "Evidence" or "Proof"? Faith actually *needs* Evidence, doesn't it?

And in order to try to figure this Mystery out- let's look at the illustration of this definition of Faith that we find in **Hebrews 11:3** because verse 3 is directly related to this definition of Faith in verse 1 as "the conviction of things not seen." **Hebrews 11:3** says:

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Now I hope you can see the connection here. The end of verse 1 says that "**Faith is the conviction of things not seen,**" and then verse 3 says that Faith understands that the worlds – in other words- the physical universe that is seen- was made out of what is *not* seen - or in other words- the Word of God. So, verse 3 is a specific illustration which was given to us by the Holy Spirit to help us to understand just what the writer meant when he wrote verse 1.

So, here's the question:

How do we know that God made the world out of nothing that is seen?

Not only were we not there when Creation occurred- but even if we *had* been there- we would not have been able to actually "see" the Act of Creation, because you can't see the Word of God until that Word is written down. So how in the world can we "know" or "understand" that the worlds were made by the Word of God? How can we know "**that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible**"- namely the Word of God?

And verse 3 answers that question: "by" or "through" Faith.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God

Now this starts to sound a little more understandable. Because if it is true that "**Faith is the conviction of things not seen,**" then it might make sense to say, "By faith (or by this conviction) we understand that the worlds were made or prepared by the Word of God."

So, the crucial question is this: Precisely how is Faith the "**conviction**" of things unseen, namely, that God created the worlds by His Word? And I take my clue from the only other place in the New Testament where God's invisible Attributes are said to be "**clearly seen**" by Man, namely, **Romans 1:20**- so let's read that verse together:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Now what is interesting is that the word "understood" that Paul used here in **Romans 1:20** is the very *same* word that the writer of **Hebrews** used in **Hebrews 11:3**:

By Faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God.

So there in **Romans 1:20** it says that,

"We *understand* the invisible Attributes of God by what has been made."

And here in **Hebrews 11:3** it says that,

"We *understand* the invisible Word of God behind Creation- by Faith."

So, **Romans 1:20** *seems* to say that the "Conviction" that Faith gives us- that God did indeed make the Universe- is the very things themselves that have been made. In other words- the "Conviction" that things have obviously been made clearly points to the indisputable fact that there *must* be a Maker. And so, **Hebrews 11:3** *seems* to say that the "Conviction" that God made the Universe- is what Faith is.

Now think about that for just a moment. What should we conclude from this? Well, here's what I conclude from all this. Faith - at least in part - is the spiritual "seeing" or the spiritual "perceiving" of the Fingerprints of God on the things that God has made. So, the Fingerprints of God on the things that God has Created- the order of the Universe; the beauty of Creation; the vastness and greatness of Creation; the undeniable complexity of Creation (the "irreducible complexity" (as Michael Behe says, in his book, *Darwin's Black Box*) – all of those things are the "conviction" that God did indeed make the worlds.

But does that then mean that our spiritual "seeing" or our spiritual "perceiving" of those Fingerprints is a kind of "conviction". Yes exactly. Because it's just the other side of the coin.

In other words- if you ask me, "*How do you know that Focus on the Family has a headquarters located in Colorado Springs,*" I could say- "*Well I just believe it is*" and leave it at that. But I *won't* say that. What I *will* say is "*I believe that because I saw it myself when Rhonda and I went there a few years ago*". So, my "seeing" is the "Conviction" that it is there.

And I think that is the way that Faith is the "Conviction" of things that are not seen. So, for example, we all look at the very same Fingerprints of God. And some people are blessed to "see"; and believe- while others do not see; and they do not believe. And those who do see have the Conviction- or the Testimony- in themselves. But how can that be?

Here is an analogy at the physical level. A few years ago, one of the fads going around America was hidden 3-D images. These are pieces of art that, on one level, are one thing, but at another level are something quite different. At first glance all you see is the surface presentation. But if you let your eyes focus more deeply, or more distantly, you may see a train or a boxing kangaroo or a globe not only appearing, but actually standing up off from the page.

Now some people stare at these pages for several minutes and see absolutely nothing but color and chaos. But others almost immediately see the head of Beethoven or a lamb. So, if

someone asks, "How do you know a lamb is there?" the answer is, "**Because I see it.**" So, your *seeing* is the conviction. They may not see what you see- but that won't change anything in your mind- because you *do* see.

Now this is what it is like for some to look at God's Creation. Some, like the poor pathetic atheists can stare at a mountain or a galaxy or the eyes of a child their entire life- time and yet see absolutely nothing but random accidents and evolution.

But others, who may very well not be as intellectually astute as the atheist, have a much deeper "view" and when they look at Creation- they "see" God's Fingerprints come into clear focus. And by "seeing" God's Fingerprints- these people know without any doubt at all- that God Almighty created all things.

But just what is the conviction that these people can offer? Nothing other than they can see it. It is as clear to them as the nose on their face and no one can talk them out of it. Why? Because they actually see it- they perceive it- God has graciously shown it to them and the seeing of it is the conviction. That is what the writer of **Hebrews** is talking about here.

And this tells us that Faith or the ability to believe; the Assurance of things hoped for; and the Conviction of things NOT seen- is a wondrous Gift of God. Now, at this point, some might ask, "But should that really be called, 'Faith?'" Didn't Paul say in **2 Corinthians 5:7**:

For we walk by faith and not by sight?

So, if what Paul said is true- then how can Faith be "sight"? Well, this is an example of how we can get off- base very fast- unless we put the Scriptures into their proper context. What the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote this in **2 Corinthians 5** is that Christ is not present *physically* on earth for us to see with our *physical* eyes- but is in Heaven. That is the context of what Paul meant when he wrote that particular verse. Paul did not mean that there is never any spiritual perception of God's Reality- because there is all the time. But Paul also didn't mean that we should never see things.

So, when the writer says in **Hebrews 11:1**:

Faith is the conviction of things not seen.

And then the writer illustrates what he meant by that in verse 3 when he says that, we understand through Faith that God created the world.

He is trying to teach us that Faith is NOT simply a blind and uninformed responding Act of the soul- but true Faith is a "grasping" or a "perceiving" or an "understanding" Act. The writer of **Hebrews** is telling us here that Faith is a spiritual Act that can actually "see" the Fingerprints of God.

Now this does not mean that we can "believe" things into existence or "speak" things into existence as some cults teach. And this also does not mean that we can actually *cause* things to be true- simply because we believe them strongly enough- so that through our belief- things are actually created or things come into existence. No, not at all- that is a *perversion* of Faith. That would be us trying to stand in the place of God and is blasphemy.

We need to know, dear friends, and with all the false Teaching that is out there today trying to deify Man- we all need to be reminded that God alone is the Creator. And God alone has the Power and the Authority to create things that are seen out of nothing. We humans are a *part* of God's glorious Creation. And that fact makes us to be the *created*- NOT the Creator.

We don't create *anything*. We have NOT been given that kind of Power or that kind of Authority- even after we are saved. We do not have the Ability to originate Life; or originate Healing; or originate Salvation; or originate financial Prosperity; or originate an end to Disease or Poverty or Injustice. Only God originates those things in His Capacity as the sovereign Lord and Creator.

God has never authorized anyone to try to "build up their Faith" to the point where we become "God" in the sense that we can now order Creation around; or cause things to appear out of nothing; or cause things to be true that were not true. That kind of Divine Power and that kind of Divine Authority rests only with the three Persons of the Godhead.

Now it is true that we are commanded to be "like" Jesus- but only in the sense that we are to be gentle and kind and holy and loving and forgiving; and that we struggle against Sin; and against the lusts of our flesh; and against temptation; and against the ways of the pagan world- so that we may obey and follow God's Word and be found faithful.

But we are not to be "like" Jesus in the sense that we are now Deity- and as Deity we can now command the Universe; and create healing; and call things into existence by the "power of our spoken word". That is ungodly blasphemy for anyone to say or to teach that- because only God can do that. That is not Faith, dear friends, that is not an example of us rising up in our most holy Faith and "taking charge" over the devil. No, that kind of stuff is nothing more than us trying to sit in God's Throne and be God. And the first person who ever taught that- was the serpent back in the Garden.

And the fact that you can hear that very Theology taught today on what is supposed to be Christian TV or radio- is testimony of how far we have fallen; and how far removed from biblical Christianity we have gone. And it is proof that the ancient Heresies, that the Christian Church confronted and denounced hundreds of years ago, are making a huge comeback in our day to fill the void- because, to a large degree, God's people no longer know God's Word.

Authentic biblical Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. For example- **Psalms 19:1** says:

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

So, you see, beloved, real Faith; true Faith; authentic Faith, is based on real and authentic Truth- not fantasy; and not superstition; and not psyching ourselves up so we can talk ourselves into believing something that isn't true. No, real Faith looks deeply at the world that God has made - and it looks right *through* Creation- so to speak - and by the Grace of God- true biblical Faith actually "sees" and "perceives" and "understands" the Glory of God as standing forth from all of Creation like the hidden image in those 3-D drawings.

Now that leaves us just a few minutes to focus on the *other* part of the definition of faith in verse 1:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

Now this part of **Hebrews 11:1** may well mean nothing more than that Faith is a deep Confidence that the Promises of God will come true so that we can bank on them. And that would be enough to free us from the Fears; and the Greed; and the Worldliness that block the flow of this radical, risk-taking, sacrificial Love. Because if we have a strong Conviction that God will care for us; and bring us to Glory; and fulfill all His Promises to us forever- then we will be free from self-Indulgence; and free to serve God and others. And if that is all that the writer of **Hebrews** was trying to say here in the first part of verse 1- then that would certainly be enough.

But I really believe that this part of **Hebrews 11:1** means much more than that. The Greek word that was translated here as, "Conviction" can mean "Nature" or "Assurance" or "Reality" or "Essence" in other places. For example, in **Hebrews 1:3**, this very *same* word was translated as Jesus being:

... the exact representation of His (God's) nature.

And if *that* is what the writer meant here in **Hebrews 11:1**- then how should we respond to that? What could the "Assurance" or the "Nature" of **things hoped for** mean?

Well, it *could* mean that Faith actually *apprehends* the Goodness and the Sweetness of what God Promises to us so clearly; and so powerfully that this Goodness and this Sweetness are substantially present in Faith. In other words, true, genuine, biblical Faith grasps – or it literally “lays hold of” - God's Preciousness so firmly- that in the Faith itself there is the Assurance of that Goodness and that Sweetness that has been promised to us.

In other words, Faith itself doesn't *create* what we hope for - that would be a mere mind game. No, Faith is a spiritual “apprehending” or a spiritual “perceiving” or a spiritual “tasting” or a spiritual “sensing” of the Beauty and the Sweetness and the Preciousness and the Goodness and the Majesty of what God promises - *especially* His Own Fellowship, and the enjoyment of His Own Presence.

You see, brothers and sisters, Faith does not just feel confident that all of this is coming someday down the road. True Faith has actually “laid hold of”; and “perceived”; and “tasted” that all of this is real. And this means that inherent inside the DNA of real and true Faith is the “Assurance” or the “Nature” of what is hoped for. In other words, Faith's enjoyment of the Promise of God is a kind of substantial “down payment” of the Reality that is sure to come.

And this is what happens when the Gospel is preached rightly, fully, and fearlessly. It is what is happening right now for many of you listening to this Teaching. The Word of God is spoken –it is broken open like sweet bread and poured out like refreshing water. And the spiritual taste of your heart is awakened, and you know that there is more here than the mere opinion of a foolish man.

So, in summary then, true and real and genuine Faith is a kind of spiritual “tasting” of what God has promised so that we feel a deep, substantial Assurance of things hoped for; and real and true and genuine Faith is a kind of spiritual “seeing” of the invisible Fingerprints of God in the things that He has made.

And by the one- we know God's Power and Wisdom to *make* us; and by the other- we know God's Goodness and Grace to *save* us.

So, I join with King David and agree with **Psalm 34:8** and say to you today:

O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Now I began by asking why this Chapter (**Hebrews 11**) is in the Bible; and what this particular Chapter has to do with our lives today. And the Answer that I gave you was that **Hebrews 11** is in the Bible to help us become the kind of people that the writer described six verses earlier in **Hebrews 10:34** when he said:

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Now look closely at what this verse says because I truly believe that **Hebrews 10:34** is one of the greatest verses in the entire Bible- because this verse explains in great detail what real Christian Faith is all about. These people who were in this small little Church in Asia Minor in the first century were Christians who "**accepted joyfully the seizure (or the confiscation) of your property**" in the Service of Jesus and in the Cause of radical and selfless Love.

In other words- these people were radically free from the love of this present world; and the material possessions of this world; and the values that drive most of what passes for success in America. They were free from this bondage because **Hebrews 10:34** says that they knew, "**that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**" And that's where Chapter 11 picks up. **Hebrews 11:1** says:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

In other words, the "knowledge" of **Hebrews 10:34** ("they knew they had a better Possession and a lasting one") is now called, "Faith." And so, in this Chapter- the writer gives us an entire Chapter of real- life examples of this radicalizing Faith that was alive and vibrant and obvious in the lives of the people of that Church.

So, the main point of the 11th Chapter of **Hebrews** is to flesh out and demonstrate more real live accounts of Faith- so that by hearing and by believing these accounts- we would do two things:

1. We would imitate the Faith that these people had
2. We would inherit the Promises of God.

Now keep in mind that this is not the first time that this writer called these people and us to both imitate and inherit something. Way back in **Hebrews 6**- the writer of this Epistle described the very *same* pattern of imitation and inheritance. Turn and read with me **Hebrews 6:11&12**:

**11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,
12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

Now did you see here that the writer says that he desires that every single person who serves Jesus Christ will show the very *same* Diligence to what?- the full assurance of Hope.

How long? “Until the end.” So, firm; steadfast; unmovable; without being lukewarm; without falling away; all the way unto the very end. And then look at verse 12- so that we will not be sluggish or lazy or slothful and so that we won't neglect so great a Salvation but that we will be followers of those people who, “through faith and patience” actually inherited the Promises of God!

So, the writer doesn't want us to follow those people who open their Bibles on Sunday and then live just like the lost pagan world all week long. No, he wants us to follow or imitate those people who through Faith and Patience, actually got what they believed in; they actually received Heaven- they made it; they actually walk on streets of gold right now. These are the people that the writer wants us to imitate.

So, I ask you today? Who do you imitate? Who do you follow? Whose example do you pattern your life after? Some movie star? Some sports star? Some music star? Some Politician? Who do you know that has lived such a life of radical, selfless Love- who was genuinely willing to lose everything with Joy? Someone, whose life is worthy that you want to imitate them?

And I say to you that this is the main point of **Hebrews 11**. This is why this Chapter is in the Bible- to give all of us more examples of "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" so that we can imitate *their* Faith; so we can walk like they walked; so we may hope like they hoped. So, we can believe like they believed. And so, we could do what they did; and live our lives- like those people lived their lives- so that we may join them in the very same eternal Inheritance.

And if you are wondering whether you should only look at Old Testament saints in this way for encouragement and imitation, **Hebrews 13:7** says no, you should also look at those who taught you the Word of God and be inspired by *their* faith too. **Hebrews 13:7** says:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

So, this is a real big issue here in the book of **Hebrews**. So, I beg you- don't let Hollywood or Madison Avenue or Wall Street or the worldly music Industry provide heroes for you. Get some godly heroes who actually serve God- and follow them- imitate their Faith. Begin to investigate and read and study Church History. Find out about people who rejoiced as they died; people who sang hymns as they burned; people who gave God glory for the privilege of dying for Jesus Christ- without complaining and murmuring. And go out and find people today who are so filled with joy and laughter and peace and love that they run from Sin; they abstain from the very appearance of Evil; they would rather die than hurt God's heart.

Read a biography about some great Missionary- rather than some self- absorbed prima donna. Do research about some great Christian businessmen. Get to know some great women- who poured their lives into their husbands and their children and their Church and their community for the sake of Christ. Come to know and understand their Faith; become familiar with their Testimony; get acquainted with their love of life in Jesus Christ and their passion for Truth; and their desire to love God above all else. That's the point of **Hebrews 11**.

Now we could take **Hebrews 10:35&36** and say that this passage expresses what is at stake as we read Chapter 11. Because in those two verses- the writer pleads with us by saying:

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

I ask you to notice the three-step pattern that the writer shows us here:

1. Enduring Confidence in God
2. Doing the Will of God in the Power of that Confidence
3. Receiving what is Promised

So, what I feel compelled to stress to you on this broadcast as we take another step in our journey through **Hebrews** is the great need that we have for our endurance or patience, as verse 36 says: "**You have need of endurance**"- which empowers us to endure with joy and confidence- whatever confronts us - until we see the Promise of God shining through.

A few years ago- I was on the phone with a brother pastor up in Charlotte, North Carolina. And this man was at the Christian and Missionary Alliance annual meeting. My friend was one of the speakers, and we had a chance for a brief conversation. We talked about the perils of doctrinal weakness spreading in an evangelicalism that defines itself increasingly in terms of methods and relationships rather than by Divine Truth.

And at one point in the conversation, he said something very crucial, and then later repeated it in his message to the Alliance. He said that many people in the modern Church don't realize how vulnerable and how perilous the life of Faith really is.

And what he meant was that we dare not take for granted the faithfulness of our Churches or our denominations or our schools or our families - or even of our own hearts, as if vigilance and conscious Endurance were not continually necessary. Because without earnest attention to Truth and Faith- everything else decays- including our own personal walk with God.

So, with renewed concern for my own Faith, and the Faith of our Church and the Faith of your soul and your family I say to you in the words of **Hebrews 10:36**, "**We have need of this endurance.**" Oh, how clearly I saw this great need recently when I attended the wake of a Pastor, who had suddenly contracted lung cancer and was dead in two weeks. How I see this need when I talk to people on the telephone or in my office- sometimes with tears- who have lost their Joy; and who have lost their Hope; and their Passion; and who really don't know if they can press on in the Ministry. Yes, my friends, the issue of patient Endurance, and Perseverance for the long haul, and staying alive, and thriving and being renewed day after day, and finding the Strength to finish the Race - this is a huge issue for all of us. And there is no resting on past experiences. There is no casual coasting. Because today's zeal can easily become tomorrow's doubt and boredom. And today's sense of spiritual numbness and agony can become tomorrow's ecstasy and power.

And so, that is why our good God gave us **Hebrews 11**. It is in *this* Chapter, that we are given example after example of true abiding and enduring Faith in the lives of real human beings so that we will be able to actually do what **Hebrews 6:12** says to us and that we will be, "**imitators (or followers) of those who through faith and patience (longsuffering, endurance) inherit the promises.**"

Now to make the connection between our previous text and today's, you may remember that I did not say a word about **Hebrews 11:2** in the previous section of our journey. And that's because I was saving it for today. Because verse 2 makes a perfect bridge to today's text. So, let's read **Hebrews 11: 1&2** again:

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

Now by reading these two verses- we see that true genuine and biblical Faith is two things, as verse one says.

1. It's being sure of God's Promises - that they are worth putting our hope in ("**the assurance of things hoped for**").
2. It's being sure that the invisible God and His Hand in Creation do in fact exist ("**the conviction of things not seen**") which we saw illustrated in verse 3.

... and once again, I want to remind you that this kind of Faith is a Gift from God.

And then the writer said this in verse 2:

For by it the men of old gained approval.

In other words, the writer is saying, *"We see this because it's played out in the lives of the Old Testament saints: **"For by it** (=by this kind of Faith) **the men of old gained approval** or in other words, by this Faith the men of old pleased God or in other words they brought God the Glory that He deserves)."*

So, the lives of the Old Testament saints are portraits for us- they are very vivid and colorful illustrations of this kind of Faith. Now keep in mind that these people don't *prove* that Faith is what verse 1 says it is- no, they simply *illustrate* it. In fact, the writer doesn't even try to prove that this is what Faith is at all. No, the writer sees Faith as one of the most basic Assumptions of the nature of Reality. And his whole interpretation of the Old Testament hangs on this. Let me show you what I mean by that.

The first two Old Testament illustrations that the writer gives of the truth of verse 2 (that the men of old gained God's approval by Faith) are Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve, and Enoch, the seventh generation after Adam, mentioned in **Genesis 5**. And he said this in verse 4:

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Now this verse and those that come after are usually used to describe the great and mighty Exploits that these men of old did. And the usual purpose of preaching from **Hebrews 11** is to excite the Church so that we will copy what they did. But that purpose of preaching completely misses the entire point that the writer is telling us here. And the reason that I know that to be true is by going back to the Greek- the language that the writer actually wrote this Epistle in and looking at what this man actually said. The writer is not talking about what all these men did for God in this Chapter- no, the writer is talking about what God did for all these men. This Chapter is not about the great exploits of these men- this Chapter is about the greatness of God in giving these men the kind of selfless, sacrificing Faith that allowed them the ability to believe and trust God for Salvation.

You see, the Faith that these men demonstrated in this Chapter is the evidence; or the proof of that kind of Faith and Love that the writer told us about way back in **Hebrews 10:34**. So go with me as we uncover just what the writer is talking about in this Chapter.

First of all- you need to know that the very same Greek word that is used in verse 2 to say “approval” is the same word used here in verse 4 to say the word, “witness” and the word, “testifying”.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, (there's God's approval- Abel “obtained the testimony”- the word here is the very same word as “approval” in verse 2), God testifying (the word, “testifying” here is also the very same word again) about his gifts: and through faith- (by the good report or the right standing that Able obtained with God through Faith) though [Abel] is dead, he still speaks.

So, what the writer focuses on with Abel is that God approved Abel’s offering. And in that approval- God counted Abel as being “Righteous” or “Just”. Now please listen to this because this is very important.

The writer tells us very clearly here that the key to Abel being approved by God to the point that God counted Abel as being Righteous- was that Abel made his offering “by Faith” and not through the action of his offering. So, Abel was not accepted by God because he gave an Offering- but because he trusted in God by Faith. So, you see, beloved, this Faith that the writer of **Hebrews** describes here is not just the Faith to be healed; or the Faith to get more of this world’s goods.

Now this is not the kind of Faith that we trust in- when we step on the brake peddle. We didn’t see who made the car, but we believe; we trust; we hope- that when we mash the brake peddle with our foot- the car will stop. That is an earthly, human initiated kind of Faith. But that kind of Faith will never forgive a single Sin or save a single soul.

The kind of Faith that made Abel acceptable to God- is a supernatural “saving Faith”- the kind of miraculous Faith that does not originate from ourselves. The Bible teaches that this kind of Faith is a gift of God. And this Gift of Faith allows wretched, fallen sinners to trust in the living God for Salvation.

So, you can see that it is not *what* we “do” that matters so much to God- but rather, *how and why we do what we do*. So, the question for us today is this:

Do our actions accurately express “**the conviction of things hoped for**”?

Now in verse 5, the writer gives Enoch as another example of the Principle of verse 2 (that the men of old gained God’s approval by Faith) - so let’s read verse 5 together:

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

So, before Enoch was taken up into Heaven- Enoch had obtained the witness; in other words, he had gained approval through Faith- using the language from verse 2.

But how did Enoch obtain this “witness” or how did he gain approval”? Enoch obtained this right standing with God the very same way that all the men of old gained approval- by and through this wondrous Gift of Faith- and NOT by something that they did for themselves. So, what the writer is telling us here is that way before Enoch was ever taken into Heaven- Enoch was justified by Faith.

Now what will help us in our journey through **Hebrews** is to remember that this Book was not originally written to Gentile believers. This Epistle was written to Jewish people who fully understood the Law and who, up until the writing of this Book, were all trying very hard to keep the Law so that they could earn God’s Favor.

So, the writer is telling these Jews that God’s Salvation was never obtained by anyone through human effort or through human actions- not even under the Old Covenant. But Salvation- from the very beginning- was *always* obtained by everyone the very same way- by Grace alone through Faith alone.

And then the writer goes about to prove to these Jewish people how that all of their Old Testament heroes that they had been taught about all their lives- were all made righteous; they all gained approval; they all had this holy witness; they were all saved and justified and pleased God- not by what *they* did- but by this marvelous Faith that is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen!

So, the writer says that BEFORE he was taken up into Heaven- Enoch was “pleasing to God.” Or in other words, Enoch was made to be pleasing in God’s sight by this Gift of Faith.

Now two times in **Genesis 5** (verses 22 and 24) Moses says that Enoch "**walked with God.**" And this is why the writer of **Hebrews** says here that Enoch pleased God. So, the writer makes his point here that "by faith" Enoch was blessed by God with translation into Heaven.

Now the writer is fully aware of the problem he has created by saying this. He has chosen two Old Testament saints to illustrate his Principle from verse 2 - that the men of old gained approval or in other words they were justified before God by Faith and not by their actions - when in fact- in neither of these Old Testament stories is the word, “Faith” ever actually mentioned.

But this is not a slip-up. The writer knows exactly what he is doing. And if we are willing to follow him today- we will see just how profound his insight really is.

The writer is not arguing here about the *nature* of Faith from these Old Testament texts. He is not saying: “*Because I find faith mentioned in these stories, therefore faith must be the way they pleased God*”. No, his argument is just the opposite. The writer sees Faith in these stories- not because it is mentioned- but because these men did, in fact, please God, and the writer knows a very simple but profound Law of God that we all need to remember: that there is absolutely no way for sinful human beings to ever please God at all in any way other than by Faith.

All of our human efforts put together as we try to do for God always and in all ways falls short of perfection. Our human actions to try to make ourselves holy and righteous in God’s Sight always come short of God’s one single Standard. So, it isn’t that *some* people please God by what they do and others don’t. No, no one can please God by human initiated actions- because all of our actions are frail and weak and they all fall short of God’s perfect Standard.

And you have to understand this, beloved. No man- not one single human being on earth that is born of woman except the one Man- Jesus Christ- has ever or will ever please God fully by what He does. Everybody else must please God by Faith- or else God is not pleased.

... to be continued

