

“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 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.” (Heb 11:1-6)

We must say a few things as introduction to this famous and blessed passage of scripture. I will be following Calvin in my exposition of this passage. The applications and remarks are my own.

1. There is an unfortunate division of chapter here: for there is no change of subject from chapter 10. The writer is speaking of the new and living way whereby we approach God. That way is faith. It is by faith that we enter the Holy of Holies by the Blood of Christ. 10:19ff. We do not enter the presence of God by Moses and the Law, but by the New Testament in the Blood of Christ.
2. The immediate verses preceding this passage in chapter 10 concern the necessity of patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. Vs. 35, 36. The just live by faith, and the Fourth Great warning of Hebrews is not to draw back, for those who despised Moses’s law died without mercy in the presence of two or three witnesses. It is a terrible thing indeed to despise the New Testament in the Blood of Christ, and count His blood and righteousness an unholy thing, treading it underfoot. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
3. He is going to describe the excellences of this faith by its effects. This is not a complete definition of faith, for faith is the constant theme of Scripture. This is not any old sort of human faith, but the faith that brings salvation, the faith of God’s elect. He is not speaking of positive thinking, here; but of the foundation of hope and the evidence of things not seen.
4. The “elders” here are the men and women of ancient times who found favor with God, because of their faith, beginning with Abel and continuing a most honorable line of those who suffered and triumphed by faith, down to the many who perished in persecution and trials just prior to the coming of Christ. All mentioned here were Old Testament saints, who were justified by faith and had peace with God, even though many of them found no peace in the world.
5. I am not going to exposit the whole chapter. I have done so in other sermons and studies on Hebrews. I want to make three important points from verse 1-6 and then I will make some applications. 1. Faith is the substance of hope; 2. Faith is the evidence of things not seen; 3. It is impossible to please God without faith. Then the applications.

I. Faith is the substance of hope.

- A. “Substance” here is the foundation or the prop. That is the literal meaning of the word which has a number of figurative meanings. The Greeks used it for philosophical ideas, but Hebrews is not a book on philosophy. It is a deeply religious book and speaks to the soul of man with the powerful insight of the Holy Spirit.
 1. It is impossible for man to live without hope, for he is created in time and the three seasons of time are active in all that he does. He would understand nothing of the present if he did not remember what he has learned in the past, including the meaning of sounds and sights and feelings of joy and gladness and sorrow and pain. He lives in the future either in the hope of good things or in the dread of evil things.
 - a. When men give up hope they despair of life and are overwhelmed in depression and bitterness.
 - b. Because hope is so powerful in human affairs, promises are important, and we speak often of the promises of the future and the joys and satisfactions we expect to receive.
 - c. We also are often filled with fears and alarms, over the threats to our happiness and contentment that we imagine are coming to us in the future. Every political campaign is filled with promises and warnings. So is every religion, which must account for the past, including the creation of the world, and for the future, with its hopes and its fears.
 - d. There are especial times when hope is strong, but where fear may also be strong. Marriage is one of these; the birth of children another; Religious commitments, new jobs, changes in employment conditions, and so forth.
 - e. Very often hopes are dashed and marriages founder, investments sour, people don’t keep promises, and hope often lives a precarious existence. People look elsewhere, to start over, to revive hope so that they can continue. This passage speaks to the reason for the realization or the failure of hope.

2. Hope based upon false faith has no foundation, because such faith is simply trying to rest on the imaginations of men, not on the promises of God. Such faith cannot fulfill its promises. Such is all hope that is based upon the things that you can see, and not on the invisible God.
 - a. Science based upon thing seen cannot succeed, even in understanding the world. Vs. 3. The worlds came into being and owe their existence to the invisible word of the invisible God. There are many useful things for this world that can be discovered by the five senses, but understanding the origins and the structure of things depends upon faith, resting on the holy Scriptures. Faith is not just a better way of understanding such things; it is the only way of understanding them. The things that are seen are not made of what they appear to be made of, and those who trust their senses in such things are certain to be deceived. All things were created of nothing, and not of things which can be sensed by the bodily senses.
 - b. The great men and women of old times, listed in this chapter, realized their hopes because they were founded on the promises of Scripture, not the vain imaginations of the idolaters that mistreated them. Abel brought a bloody sacrifice, because of the promise of God; Enoch was taken from the ungodly world because he believed the promises and pleased God; Noah built an ark and escaped the flood; Abraham found the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God; Sarah judged God faithful who had given her the promise; Moses forsook Egypt because he saw Him who is invisible, and so forth. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and the others of old time walked and lived by faith. They did not walk sinlessly nor perfectly, but they patiently looked for the promise of God and lived in the blessed hope that cannot fail.

B. Faith in God and His promises is therefore the foundation of real hope.

1. All else is a phantasm that will disappoint at death if not before. Only the promises of the Word of God will endure beyond the grave and carry you and me to that blessed hope after death as 1 Peter tells us in chapter one: 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." And the blessed Apostle Paul wrote: "We are saved by hope."
2. We also read that the things which are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal. Look at 2 Cor 4:15-18 and 5:1,2 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. 1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
3. We also read in Proverbs 10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish. And again in Pr 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.
4. Jesus also spoke of this in the famous parable of the wise and foolish men; the wise heard the words of Christ and did them, and he is compared to the man who built his house upon the rock on the foundation and prop of hope; the foolish man did not, and all his hopes and dreams came crashing down when the floods, the wind, and the terrible storms came. His hopes perished because he had no prop or foundation for his hopes. How miserable those who build wood, hay, and stubble and whose hopes are consumed in the day of God's wrath.

II. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

A. Faith in the New Testament in the blood of Christ brings to the mind and soul the things that cannot be seen with the five senses.

1. We do not see the Holy of Holies when we meet on the Sabbath Day; when we commune in the body and blood of Christ; when we speak of sins forgiven. But these are real things, even though they are invisible to the senses.
2. By faith we see that we are justified by faith; that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives and we are being transformed inside, in our hearts and minds, to love and to seek the promise of God.
3. The world does not see this and cannot see them; for they are seen only by the eyes of the soul and the mind.

4. The just shall live by faith, for they see things that are invisible. They make decisions that are in terms of invisible things: like justice, truth, love, patience, and hope—things that are everyday on the lips of the ungodly, but are perverted and twisted for political gain, financial gain, for power and reputation. The men and women of old, mentioned in this chapter, did not live for things that are seen, but for the things that are not seen. Esau sold the things that cannot be seen for a mess a pottage that he could see and smell and eat. What a poor choice he made. The blind persecute those who see, because the blind cannot see and cannot value that which does feed the belly. The blind love the world, for that is all they can see, and their vain hopes are founded upon what their bodily senses tell them. What shall they do in the day that their souls are required of them?

B. Faith in the New Testament in the Blood of Christ is the evidence of things not seen.

1. There is a paradox here: Evidence is that which is brought to the senses. An important principle of law is *habeas corpus* “Do you have the body?” There is no murder if you don’t have the body. In this world we want things brought to our senses in order to believe the evidence.
2. This is the mistake that the ungodly make over and over. They want to see the evidence, and often we fall into this trap, wanting to show to their five senses the evidence for the truth of the Gospel.
3. But the evidence of the invisible things is not in the visible world, and cannot be discerned by the five senses. They are seen and made evident only by faith.
4. The ungodly contradict themselves in this every day; for they make decisions everyday on things which cannot be seen, which they accept without evidence to their five senses. They build hope on fantasies and false dreams and the prophecies of false gods and idols and political parties, but they reject the witness in their own souls and heart, testimony that cannot be seen with the five senses, but become evident by faith.
5. Faith is the result of a new creation; 2Cor 4: 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
6. We believe in order to see; we cannot see until we believe and this is the work of God alone.

III. It is impossible to please God without faith. Vs. 6

A. Because the ungodly are foolish in heart, they deny that He exists. They deny the evidence in their own hearts and are at war with the truth in their hearts. Until they throw down their rebellion, they cannot please God, for they are at war with the very fabric of the universe and their own souls.

B. If they do not deny Him in the abstract, they deny Him in two important particulars:

1. They deny His integrity, for they do not believe His promises. The just shall live by faith. God has promised forgiveness of sins and a blessed eternity on the basis of faith in the New Testament in the blood of Christ. It is a frightful offense to doubt the integrity of God, as though He were a false promiser and a confidence man. You need to repent if you are one of these.
2. They deny His power, that He is able to do what He has promised; to take us as His children, to love us, and to provide for all our need. These incredible promises He is able to perform. We must trust Him in true faith after we have received the knowledge of the truth and not sin against Him in such a horrible way.
3. Faith is proved by patience. It is not how your start, it is how you end up that counts. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Paul put it this way in Romans 10:5 “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” (Ro 10:5 AV) and contrasting that with faith: 10:11,12: “11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 ¶ For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Ro 10:11-13 AV).
4. The just shall live by faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Application:

1. New Testament worship is seeking the Lord by a new and living way; it doesn’t mean NOT seeking the Lord, but seeking Him by faith.
2. The particulars of this are in Heb. 10:19-25 [which see]
 - a. We enter the presence of God only by the blood of Christ. It is through His blood we enter behind the veil.
 - b. We have a high priest: Jesus Christ who is seated in heaven, a priest after the order of Melchisedek.

- c. We come with a true heart in full assurance of faith, justified by faith, baptized in pure water.
 - d. We persevere in our faith, which is the gift of God; not something we or somebody else talked us into.
 - e. We love the people of God, in love and good works. Vs. 24
 - f. We go to church vs. 25; so as to encourage and exhort one another. It isn't just about me, me, me.
3. In other words, the justified shall live by faith, not drawing back to perdition, but believing to the saving of the soul, for faith is the foundation and prop of hope; and the invisible evidence of invisible things, and anybody who was saved in any age of the church was saved by faith. The just shall live by faith.