

Faith Is...

Hebrews 11:1-3

If you were to ask a dozen different people their definition of “faith” you would probably receive a dozen different answers. Without faith it’s impossible to please God, so we better know what faith is.

(1). **Faith is the assurance** of things hoped for, and (2). **Faith is the conviction** of things not seen. The word for **assurance** in the first definition and the word for **conviction** in the second definition are unusual words and very difficult to translate into English. The King James Version uses the word “substance” and “evidence.” You usually don’t think of faith as substance or evidence, so what is faith?

I. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

The word "assurance" can mean "nature" or "substance" or "reality" or "essence." This very word is used in Heb. 1:3 where *"Christ is the exact representation of God's nature."* How is faith a substance?

A. Faith is more than hope about something out there someday.

Faith is the experience of that something hoped for out there right now (i.e. God’s love, God’s favor, God’s presence, God’s control). Faith has spiritually laid hold of and perceived and tasted that all this is real. Faith’s enjoyment of the promise is a down payment of the reality coming.

B. Faith is spiritual substance of the sweetness of God now.

A person of faith lives his life with the knowledge of the eternal in the present. God reigns. God wins. God cares. Nothing in this life knocks out my assurance of the goodness of my great God.

II. Faith is the conviction of things not seen.

The word for "conviction" or "evidence" is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. Outside the New Testament, its normal use is "proof" or "argument" or "evidence" - **something objective**. It matters not that others cannot believe, or that others do not see Him. We have assurance of Him. I cannot see God, but I have proof of His presence in my life, in my heart, my conscience, my desires. Faith is perspective. What you see in your life cannot, is not, will not necessarily be seen by others.

III. Faith is a distinguishing mark of God’s grace.

There is a great trilogy throughout the New Testament—faith, hope, and love—and two are seen here.

A. Sinners gain approval by faith in God’s work on their behalf.

1. The patriarchs were men and women of faith and gained their approval by it.

This theme of v. 2 runs throughout Hebrews 11. Without faith it is impossible to please God. From Adam, Abel and Abraham, to today, every sinner is received by a holy God via faith.

2. The lack of faith in God is a sign of reprobation or disapproval from God.

"Since the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made" (Romans 1:20).

The word “understood” in Romans 1:20 is the same word as in Hebrews 11:3, *"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God."* The fingerprints of God are on the things he has made - the order, the beauty, the greatness—are evidence of God.

B. Looking throughout nature you see God’s hand at work.

John Piper says, “Faith looks deeply at the world God has made - looks through it, so to speak – and by the grace of God, faith sees the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). When we begin to see Christ calming the storm, healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, and turning water into wine, we say to ourselves, “Yes! God has come as Man. In Him I trust. I believe in Jesus Christ!”