

## Demonstrating Faith Hebrews 11:1-2

The book of Hebrews was written in order to encourage persevering faith in Jesus. Hebrews 11 gives us a roll call of the faithful saints of the old covenant — saints who persevered in faith throughout their lives despite never receiving the ultimate promises of God while they lived (11:13). What our writer is asking his readers to do is entirely consistent with the saints they revere; have faith in God...through the Person of Jesus Christ.

John 14:1b – *You believe in God; believe also in me*

Today's passage demonstrates, more than defines this faith for us. This faith is "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" (11:1). Persevering faith is a firm confidence in God and all of His promises. It is a persuaded trust that God will be true to His Word. This faith is not something that we conjure up ourselves but is God's gift (Eph 2:8) and founded on God's Word to us.

For instance, the arrival of the new heavens and the new earth is one example of a promise that has yet to be fulfilled. But the resurrection and ascension of Christ guarantees that the whole created order will be transformed. Ask the Lord to increase your faith, and remember that the work of Christ guarantees that God will be faithful to us.

ILL - The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3 foot wall. The animals will not jump it they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us. We know where our feet will land.

Remember, as our last chapter detailed, that the original audience was persecuted for professing faith in Christ. Many of them considered returning to the old covenant so as to avoid persecution. They thought that they could be true to God and to the witness of the old covenant saints if they made such a return.

However, nothing could have been further from the truth. The original audience was living in the latter days after the incomplete revelation of the old covenant had been completed by the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus Christ (chaps. 1–7). Jesus inaugurated the new covenant and did away with ineffectual animal sacrifices by the perfect sacrifice of Himself (8:1–10:18).

Living in the latter days requires faith in and faithfulness to the Lord of the new covenant whom the author has repeatedly named as, Jesus. Faith in him means bearing his name publicly even if it brings us reproach (vv. 19–34). We cannot do this, however, without the faith that preserves our souls (vv. 35–39).

This is the kind of faith the old covenant saints are commended for in this chapter (vs 2s). It was a persevering faith that endured despite never having received what was promised (v. 13).

And so, our author concluded the last chapter saying,

Hebrews 10:39 - *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

Why not: The Bible teaches us that faith is essential to Christian living

Habakkuk 2:4 – *the righteous shall live by his faith*

Jesus commended faith on several occasions

Mark 8:10 - *When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.*

Faith is a critical biblical concept. Paul defines it as one of the three chief Christian virtues

1 Cor 13:13 – *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

It is faith that saves us

Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works...*

Faith is one of the most important concepts in the Bible. Our author spends an entire chapter defining it through the history of Old Testament saints. He’s trying to show them how their faith is supposed to find its resting place in Jesus.

... ”*faith is dynamic, and just as we needed faith to be saved the first time (justification), we need faith to be saved every day (sanctification) - (In regard to justification) The gospel of justification by faith in Christ is the mainspring of the Christian life. And like the mainspring in old watches, it must be wound every day. Because we have a natural tendency to look within ourselves for the basis of God’s approval or disapproval, we must make a conscious daily effort to look outside ourselves to the righteousness of Christ, then to stand in the present reality of our justification... (In regard to sanctification) Faith involves both **renunciation** and **reliance**. We have to first **renounce** all confidence in our own power and then **rely** entirely on the power of the Holy Spirit. We must be **enabled**, not merely **helped**. What’s the difference? The word **help** implies we have some ability but not enough; we need someone else to supplement our partially adequate ability. By contrast, **enablement** implies that we have no ability whatsoever. We’re entirely powerless. We can do nothing. But when by faith we **renounce** self-sufficiency and embrace **reliance** on the power of the Holy Spirit, we receive divine empowerment, enablement, and strength for personal transformation and ministry.*”

- Jerry Bridges

(I don’t need help. If Jesus helps me, I’ll get in his way).

### **First: Faith is Hope.**

Hebrews 11:1-2 defines faith in terms of assurance and conviction.

It is “*the assurance of things hoped for.*”

Hebrews 11:1a - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for...*

a) *Faith = pistis* = conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it relating to God. It is the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ relating to Christ. It is a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God

b) *Assurance = hupostasis/hypostasis* from *hupo/hypo* = *under* + *histemi* = stand) is a literally a standing or setting under and thus describes a support, a confidence, a steadiness, a foundation (refers to ground on which something is built = the foundation of things for which we hope) and as used in Scripture represents a solid, unshakable confidence in God (that He Who has promised is faithful). *Hupostasis* is that which underlies the apparent and which therefore is the reality, the essence or the substance. It came to denote essence, substance or the inner nature. *Hupostasis* is a very common word from Aristotle on and was used in Greek to describe that which stands under anything such as a building, a contract, a promise. It is common in the papyri in business documents as the basis or guarantee of transactions or with the meaning of a title deed. One translation renders it "*Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.*"

In everyday English, we use the term *hope* for things that we want to see happen but are uncertain as to whether they will actually occur. Biblical hope, however, includes no uncertainty. It hopes for a certain future. We are sure of divine promises of the future will be fulfilled because we know the Lord's trustworthy character.

*Faith is reason at rest in God.*

- Charles Spurgeon

This is the kind of confidence that Jesus placed in his Father when, on the cross, he cried,

Psalm 22:4-5 – *In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. 5 To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*

Faith is the assurance of this hope because it gives what lies ahead a present reality. Faith means that we are confident today that what God has pledged to do for His people will come to pass. Hope, because it is certain, is a sure anchor for the soul that grants us subjective assurance—the personal, confident knowledge that the Lord will keep His Word, as our author has already demonstrated.

Hebrews 6:13-20 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” 15 And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

*Assurance* (“substance,” in other translations) refers to the tangible reality of our hope. If “what is hoped for” is God’s promise — an eternal, resurrected life with Him in a renewed creation — then our faith in what God has done through Jesus, who has already passed into the heavens, wrought by His Spirit in us, acts as our guarantee, our assurance.

These Hebrew readers have every reason to have faith in Jesus as God’s ultimate promise.

2 Corinthians 1:20 - *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.*

Because of God’s historic faithfulness, faith, for us, is a conviction

### **Second: Faith is Conviction**

Hebrews 11:1b – *the conviction of things not seen*

*Conviction = elegchos = proof.* That by which invisible things are proved (and we are convinced of their reality).

We trust in things not directly accessible to our five senses, because it is tied to future realities, but that does not mean our faith lacks evidence. It is “the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is not exercised in what we can see, hear, feel, touch, or taste but in what our senses do not presently experience. This does not make faith a blind leap into the dark or something we exercise without any consideration of evidences. After all, Hebrews 11 moves on in verses 4–40 to refer to God’s work in history to illustrate true faith. Faith is not believing in things for which there is no evidence,

Faith is not blind credulity or belief for the sake of making us feel good. It is the conviction of things unseen based on the witness of reliable prophets and Apostles who had a firsthand encounter with the things—and with the Person—in which we trust.

The evidence of the Bible gives us convictional faith

I do not know what tomorrow will bring, but God does. If I trust Him for tomorrow, I have faith in something I have not seen. But that faith is an evidence because its object is God, who has a track record and who is infallible.

This is why Christian faith it is not a “blind” faith at all, nor is it a delusion, because our trust is in the One who has proven Himself throughout history.

These Hebrew readers have every reason to have convictional faith about Jesus. He is the culmination of the OT promises and everything their forefathers looked for in a Messiah.

### **Conclusion:**

What is our author’s primary point?

v 2 - *For by it [faith] the people of old received their commendation.*

He is asking them to focus their faith on God as revealed in the Jesus who is better than the OT sacrifices, priests, etc., in order to be also commended for their faith. In effect he says,

*“I’m not asking you to do anything that is out of line with the OT or what our ancestors believed. I’m not asking you to step out of line. In fact, I’m asking you to ‘get in line’ with what they believed.” I am going to show you person after person from the Old Testament, from the time before the Flood, from the times of the Patriarchs, from the times of Moses, and from the times after Moses, in the Old Testament, of people who lived by faith, persevering to the end of their course, even though they never heard the name, Jesus, which is yours to know, believe, to hear, to say, and to trust.”*

And then he demonstrates it...

The author takes us back to the Old Testament and makes it clear that these saints are precursors to believers in Christ. This is important because some of these people are considering, like other friends of theirs, claiming Christ but also going back to some form of Judaism. The author pulls that argument out from under them. He says that if you go back to the faith of your fathers, you will find that that faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you depart from Christ, you are not departing from Christ *to* the patriarchs, you are departing from Christ *and* the patriarchs to something else, something in fact, foreign to Judaism. He is going to argue in the rest of this chapter that the OT saints believed in the promises of God which were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ and that to believe in Jesus is exactly what the Old Testament saints looked forward to in God’s promises. It’s a brilliant argument for people who are wavering in their faith in Jesus.

This is why, after the list of OT saints, he says, *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...”* (12:2).

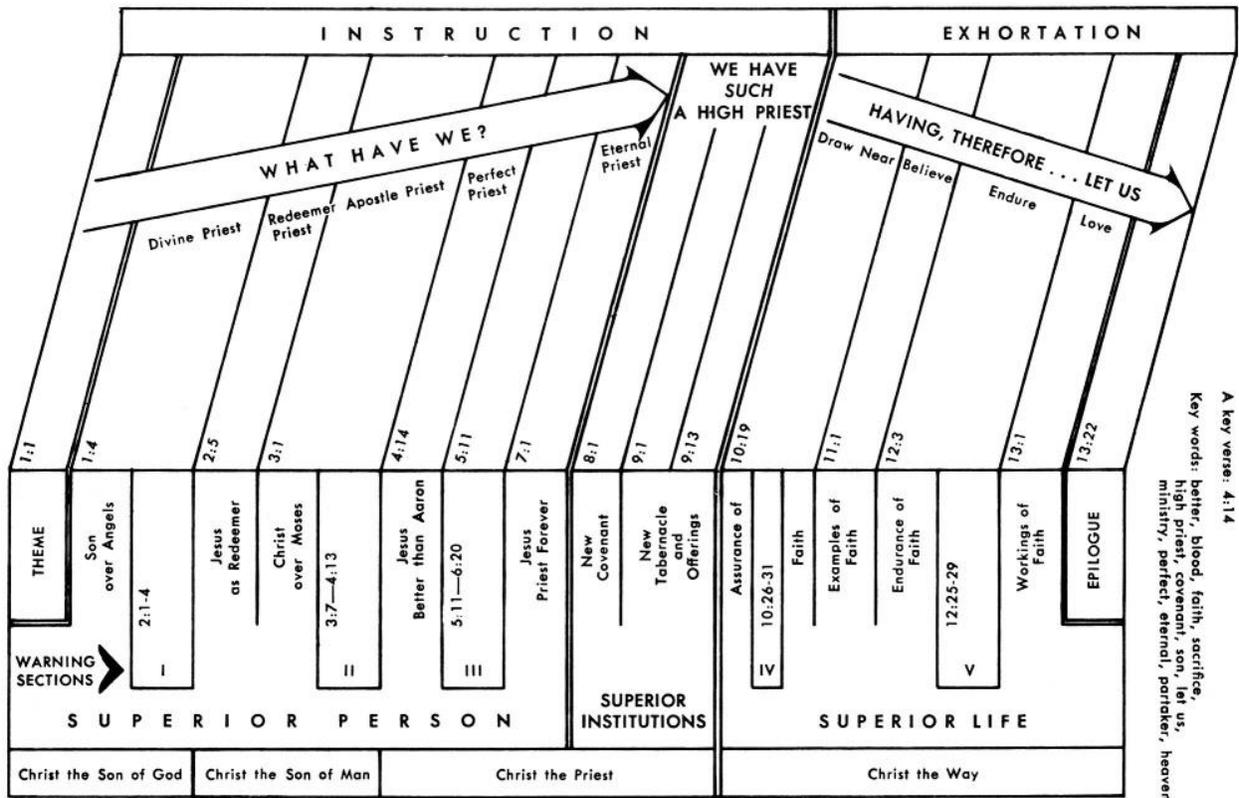
The OT saints are not witnessing our race. They are witnesses about Jesus and how he is the fulfilment of all they hoped for...

11:13 - *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised...*

Biblical faith is not “I wish” fulfillment that believes in something just because it makes us feel better. Neither does it involve believing despite the evidence. Instead, biblical faith is confident trust in an objective but unseen reality for which there is much historic evidence. Christians have grounds and reason to believe what we believe.

First Corinthians 13:12 - *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

This text indicates that faith is a virtue that will one day pass away. In glory we will see God face to face and will no longer need to hope in what is presently unseen. Until then, however, we are called to stake our very lives on the promises of God. We must affirm the truth of His Word, not because of an irrational trust or wishful thinking but because He has kept His promises in the past and will certainly do so in the future.



From: Insight for Living/Chuck Swindoll