

## Faith

I heard about a young man who recently finished seminary and had just boarded a flight to his first pastorate. He truly wanted to be a man of faith and be truthful in every way, so he prayed that God would help him to be totally transparent and honest in all his ways. Just then he saw a beautiful young lady walking down the aisle of the plane towards him, and to his great excitement she sat in the seat next to him. Then she pulled out her Bible and began to read. He was delighted, being single and very available. So as he engaged her in a small conversation he found out that she too was single and unattached as well. Then he asked the question, "What kind of a man are you looking for?" She answered, "I'm very attracted to Native American. They have such strong faces and seem to have such dedicated outlooks." Then she added, "I'm also very attracted to Jewish men because of their backgrounds in religious areas and strong commitments." "But I'm also very attracted to country boys – they're so hardworking and down to earth." "What's your name?"

Then the young man said, "I'm Geronimo Goldberg, but back home they just call me 'Bubbah.'"

It didn't take long for that young man to drop a few notches on the faith scale.

How many of you know that people of faith are imperfect?

The recipients of the Book of Hebrews had undergone persecution and were being pulled back into Judaism as a result. They were asking serious questions, "Is following Christ worth the struggle?"

In chapter eleven the writer of Hebrews shows that we overcome through faith.

### **1. Faith explained, 2. Examples of faith, 3. Experience of faith.**

<sup>1</sup>Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen.

<sup>2</sup>For by it men of old gained approval.

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup> By faith Able 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.

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>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. (Hebrews 11:1-6)

## I. Explanation of Faith

What is faith?

<sup>1</sup>Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen.

In this verse faith is defined as the assurance of things hoped for...

**Assurance** – hupostasis – stasis – “to stand” hupo – “under”

‘That which stands under’ – *a foundation*

The ground on which one builds a hope...

Legal term: Evidence of ownership – “*Faith is the **title deed** of things hoped for*”<sup>1</sup>

**Vincent says** that assurance is , “...*the firm grasp of faith on unseen fact.*”

**Conviction** – elegchos – “**a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested.**”

**Thayer defines** it as, “that by which invisible things are proved  
and we are convinced of their reality.”

When these words are combined we have a process of proof or demonstration.  
Verse two illustrates – For by it... “*For by the means of faith*”

Vincent writes on the ‘Wider concept’ of things hoped for:

“Faith has the power to see and realize the unseen,  
for the experience of the fathers proves it”<sup>2</sup>

- **Faith is** the Foundation and the Reality of our hopes

## II. Examples of Faith

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<sup>1</sup> Moulton and Milligan

<sup>2</sup> Vincent

## 1. Faith gains approval

<sup>2</sup>For by it men of old gained approval.

**Gained approval** - Lit. "*Obtained a testimony.*"

Just as God's men of history through their faith gained a testimony that they were righteous, so we must follow in their footsteps and show everyone what faith in Christ can do. A testimony is a demonstration that faith in Christ produces a changed life. What produces a testimony?

People who believe and Obey

Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, wrote,

"God honors love and honors faith,  
but His special rewards are for those who are obedient."

*Obedience equals blessing.* Genuine faith is demonstrated by an obedient life, that results in God's blessing in their lives, in the lives of their children, and their children's children.

**What is an obedient life?** Obedience is the fruit of genuine faith.

Test:

Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God?

Are you willing to obey the Word of God?

– even the parts you don't agree with?

### **Partial Obedience is always disobedience**

King Saul is a great example of partial obedience. After the battle at Gilgal the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying,

"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not carried out My commands." ((1 Sam.15:10-11)

Saul compromised the direct commands of God and did what was right in his own eyes. Partial obedience is disobedience and always results the removal of blessing.

Do you want God's best? His special rewards?

Faith, demonstrated by complete obedience, gains God's approval.

## 2. Faith gives understanding.

<sup>3</sup>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.

**Saint Bernard of Clairvaux** wrote,

“I believe though I do not comprehend, and I hold by faith what I cannot grasp with the mind.”

The Scriptures teach that God created the world. The biblical account of the creation explains that God spoke and all things came into being.

Faith opens the eyes of our hearts to see the unseen that lies behind that which is visible. Through faith we understand 'Cause and Effect'.

The Open Bible says,

“Everything that began owes its existence to a “cause.”

We have a watch; we must have a watchmaker. We have a building; we must have a builder. We have a creation; then we must have a creator. This creation could not have come into existence without an intelligent, personal creator anymore than the alphabet could produce a book by itself without an author”<sup>3</sup>

- Faith gives approval.
- Faith gives understanding.

## 3. Faith Overcomes

- Because of their faith, they became overcomers

<sup>4</sup> By faith Able 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.

God honors men and women of faith; they are famous in heaven.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Open Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1979), p. 1179.

Listing them chronologically the writer selects from biblical history; a library of those who overcame great dangers, struggles, and adversaries through faith.

### **Able is the first mentioned in God's 'Hall of Faith'.**

Able and his brother Cain were sons of Adam. Each brought offerings to the Lord: Able from his flock and Cain from his garden. The Lord accepted Able's offering as a '**better sacrifice than Cain**' and rejected Cain's. As a result, Cain was overcome by jealous anger and murdered his brother. Essentially, Able's offering was offered in faith out of obedience to what they had been instructed, while Cain's offering was one of his own choosing, from the works of his hands and not acceptable to God. MacArthur writes,

“Cain failed to acknowledge his sin and refused to obey God by bringing the sacrifice God required. He did not mind worshipping God, as long as it was on his own terms, in his own way. And God rejected his sacrifice and rejected him.”<sup>4</sup>

Cain became the father of false religion; Able through faith found life.

God approved of Able's offering.

The only thing that obtained righteousness for Able was that, in faith, He did what God told him to do. That is the only thing that changes a man's relationship to God. It is not how good we are, but whether or not we trust in Him, that counts with God. That trust is evidenced in obedience to His Word.<sup>5</sup>

The next **hero of faith** is Enoch.

Able worshipped by faith and Enoch walked by faith.

<sup>5</sup>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.

### **By faith Enoch didn't die**

The Genesis account of Enoch records,

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah.  
Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became  
the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters.

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 300.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, p. 301.

So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.  
Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him. (Gen. 5:24)

God and Enoch had great fellowship for three hundred years. Then one day while they were on their walk, God said, "Enoch, how would you like to see my house?" It was so great that Enoch decided to stay.

**The essential message** is that Enoch's pleased God by his faith.  
Just as Able was made righteous by faith, so Enoch by his faith pleased God.  
In pleasing God, they both overcame death.

If these men were to speak to us, what would they say?

There's only one way to please God – by our faith.

Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. (Rom. 5:1)

Both Enoch and Able pleased God. And defeated death by their faith.

### **III. Experiencing God in Faith.**

<sup>6</sup>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. (Hebrews 11:6)

Experiencing God begins with a growing relationship of faith

#### 1. Believe that God is

Einstein said,

"Certainly there is a God. Any man who doesn't believe in a cosmic force is a fool, but we could never know Him."

Einstein was brilliant, but he was wrong. We can know God and experience Him!

#### 2. Believe that God rewards those who seek Him.

How can we seek God?

- **Prioritizing God**

We make time for what is important; we make excuses for what's not.

Put the things of God in first place, and let God sort out everything else.

- **Obedience to Scriptural truths.** (Vs. partial or incomplete obedience)

Spurgeon wrote,

Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle; he that obeys God trusts God; and he that trusts God obeys God. He that is without faith is without works, and he that is without works is without faith.

Faith pleases God. Without faith cannot please God.

- **Keep on Seeking God until He is pleased**

God will prove Himself to be a rewarder of that person who diligently seeks Him.