

UNDERSTANDING FAITH

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Hebrews 10:37 For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but **my righteous one shall live by faith**, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, **but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.**

Hebrews 11 is a continuation of encouragement to persevere in faith.

1. WHAT IS FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Note: The first phrase and the second phrase are saying the same thing in a different way.

“**Assurance**” (**hypostasis**) and “**conviction**” (**elenchos**) means “to be sure of, fully confident”—it is not a mere acknowledgment but a great sense of certainty beyond doubt.

- ❖ **Hebrews 3:14**, For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence (*hypostaseōs*) firm to the end. **BIBLICAL FAITH HOLDS ASSURANCE AND CONVICTION FIRMLY TO THE END.**

Illustration: “Church history illustrates this: In the early days of persecution, a humble Christian was brought before the judges. He told them that nothing they could do could shake him because he believed that if he were true to God, God would be true to him. **“Do you really think,” asked the judge, “that the like of you will go to God and His glory?” “I do not think,” said the man. “I know.”**

“Assurance” (*hypostasis*) and “conviction” “**of things hope for**” and “**of things not seen**” are trusting in God [who is invisible] to receive what He has promised [things not seen now].

- ❖ **Romans 8:24**, For in this hope we were saved. **Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?**

A. SOURCE OF FAITH: God’s faithfulness

- ❖ **Hebrews 11:6**, And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God **must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**
 - If you believe in God’s existence, you must also believe in His faithfulness to reward those who trust in His promises.

- ❖ **Hebrews 10:23**, Let us **hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**, for he who promised is faithful.

Caution: Lack of faith is sin because it distrusts God's faithful character.

Note: Unbelief is practical atheism.

B. OBJECT OF FAITH: God's promise

- ❖ **Hebrews 11:1**, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- ❖ **Hebrews 6:11-12**: 11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but **imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises**.
- ❖ **Hebrews 10:36**, For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God **you may receive what is promised**.

Application: Faith is trusting in God and His promises because of His faithful character.

Observation:

- ▶ The author didn't write this chapter to encourage his readers to have faith in God to meet their personal needs and desires [although we can make that application].
 - "Speak God's words over your circumstances today. Speak His words in faith and watch Him move!" — Kenneth Copeland
- ▶ The main purpose of the author in writing this chapter is to have faith in God's promise to receive eternal inheritance available only in Christ Jesus who died for us our sin and reconciled us to God. Don't lose your heart because of trials.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance **of things hoped for**, the conviction of **things not seen**. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.

Hebrews 11:39 And all these, though commended through their faith, **did not receive what was promised**, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that **apart from us they should not be made perfect**.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. **14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland**. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 **But as**

it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 10:32-36, 32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, **since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.** 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 is promised.**

William Lane explains: Faith celebrates now the reality of the future blessings which make up the objective content of Christian hope.

- ❖ **Romans 8:23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. **Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?** 25 **But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.**
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:1** For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 **He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.** 6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 **for we walk by faith, not by sight.**
 - We walk by faith that one day we will be clothed with heavenly dwelling and not by sight, i.e. we haven't yet seen it but have faith that one day we will behold it and experience it.

Illustration: Pastor and author Tim Keller passed away at the age of 72 on May 2023. He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2020.

- ▶ “All death can now do to Christians is to make their lives infinitely better.”
- ▶ His last words were, **“There is no downside for me leaving, not in the slightest.”** Michael Keller said his father had prayed during his final hours, "I'm thankful for all the people who've prayed for me over the years. I'm

thankful for my family, that loves me. I'm thankful for the time God has given me, but I'm ready to see Jesus. I can't wait to see Jesus. Send me home."

2. WHAT FAITH IS NOT?

1. Faith is not blind faith; it is a reasoned trust in God's existence, God's character, and God's Word.

Throughout the book of Hebrews, the author provides solid reasons on which people must put their faith. FAITH IS TRUST IN DIVINE TESTIMONY.

- ▶ Christ is supreme over angels (Chp 1)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over Moses (Chp 2)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over Levitical priesthood (Chp 5-7)
- ▶ Christ is supreme over the Old Covenant (Chp 8-10)
- ▶ Christ is our supreme hope (Chp 11)

Kent Hughes: "True faith is neither brainless nor a sentimental feeling. It is a solid conviction resting on God's words that makes the future present and the invisible seen. Faith has at its core a massive sense of certainty."

2. Faith is based on God's Word and God's promises, not on presumptions [emotionally driven based on personal desires].

- ❖ [v.7] By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.
- ❖ [v.8] By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.
- ❖ [v.11] By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.
- ❖ [v.29] By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

Presumption has two faces:

- ▶ Faith in personal desires to come to fulfilment [wild personal dream]
- ▶ Faith in others' experience to come to fulfilment [Peter walking on the water]

An example of presumption in Deuteronomy 1 [when the Lord commanded Israel to conquer Amorites, they were afraid of their stature and grumbled. But when the Lord became angry because of their unbelief and disobedience...]:

41 “Then you answered me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD. We ourselves will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And every one of you fastened on his weapons of war and thought it easy to go up into the hill country. 42 And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, Do not go up or fight, for I am not in your midst, lest you be defeated before your enemies.’ **43 So I spoke to you, and you would not listen; but you rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country.** 44 Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do and beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah. 45 And you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD did not listen to your voice or give ear to you. 46 So you remained at Kadesh many days, the days that you remained there.

Applications:

- ▶ When there is a clear promise from the Word, trust in God unwaveringly.
- ▶ When there is no clear promise from the Word, trust in God’s ability and leave to His sovereign will.
- ▶ Beware of presumptuousness.
- ❖ **Daniel 3:16–18**, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us [God ability]** from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. **But if not [God’s will]**, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Summary: Faith is trusting the faithfulness of God to faithfully fulfil His promise to give us an eternal inheritance in Christ. Let’s long for it. Don’t let current trials fog your eternal perspective. Persevere in your faith firmly till the end.

Sermon Discussion Questions in Small Groups:

1. What is faith and how is it different from mere acknowledgement?
2. What is the source and object of faith?
3. If someone says, “Faith is blind”, how do you respond to it?
4. What is the difference between faith and presumption? How should you exercise your faith when there is no apparent promise or Word from the Holy Scripture?
5. How has this message personally been an encouragement to you?