

Heb. 11:1-2 (WCF 14:1-2) “Sight Unseen”

For the Children: People believe in many things they have not seen – such as the many places overseas to which they have never been. They believe these places exist because people they trust say they have been there. God’s children believe what God says in His Word – even though we have not seen all it talks about and promises – because we trust the Lord. That is what faith is: trusting that God and His Word are completely true and acting on that basis. If we believe other people, who are not always reliable, we should believe God. He never lies and is never wrong. **Questions:** Find from LD 7, Q/A 21, the 3 main aspects of faith. What are some of the truths we must believe even though we cannot see them? How can the OT believers help us when we struggle with doubts?

Introduction:

First Point: A Matter of Knowing Unseen Realities

- 1) The Knowledge Component: Saving faith involves knowledge of the Truth. It presupposes that the Bible is God’s inerrant and authoritative Word. See WCF 14:2, LD 7, Q/A 21
- 2) The Unseen Aspect: Faith also believes the promises, commands and doctrines of the Word that involve an “unseen” aspect. We have to take the OT miracles like Creation on faith. We have to hope in the future fulfillment of the promises though we cannot see these things yet. We have to accept the truth of Biblical ethics, the penalty for disobedience and the blessing upon obedience, though these truths cannot be physically seen
- 3) Teaching Trust: By requiring hope and conviction in the unseen, God teaches us to trust His Word, even when circumstances seem to point in the other direction. Hence Heb. 11 goes on to supply a list of OT saints who trusted the Lord even when fulfillment looked unlikely. We should not resent this requirement to trust the Lord re unseen realities – even when we have to struggle with doubt

Second Point: A Matter of Assurance

- 1) Assurance Part of the Definition of Faith: LD 7, Q/A 21 lists assurance as part of the definition of faith. The emphasis of WCF 14:3 and ch. 18 is more on the *subjective enjoyment* of the gift of assurance, which may vary. Assurance follows from belief in God’s Word and personal commitment to it. Heb. 11:1 also defines faith as the “*assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen”
- 2) Things Hoped For and Unseen: The believer is assured that God’s promises re the future will all come to pass, and he accepts this assurance – things such as the 2nd Coming and final judgement, the restoration of Creation, the glorification and eternal life of the believer. He accepts the teaching re unseen present realities as well – Christ’s presence in heaven and with us, the Holy Spirit’s work, God’s protecting grace, His hearing of our prayers
- 3) The Struggle with Doubt: As with sin in general, as Rom. 7 explains, the new person created within us battles with the old nature’s doubts. The old nature always asks, “Did God really say...?” The unbeliever never really struggles in this way, because he lacks inner assurance

Third Point: A Matter of God’s Approval

- 1) A Gift from God: True faith has God’s approval because it is His gift, created by Word and Spirit (WCF 14:1). It accepts, receives and rests upon His Son for salvation (WCF 14:2). It connects us to Christ, so that we are justified and approved by God. That is why the “men of old gained approval” by faith (Heb. 11:2). The “men of old” are OT saints like those listed in Heb. 11, who looked to God’s promises/the Messiah, even when all seemed against the fulfillment of those promises. See Gen. 15:6
- 2) Encouragement from the Cloud of Witnesses: Looking to the account of the faith of these “men of old” can encourage us in the midst of our doubts. For we see how, despite their sins and doubts and adverse circumstances, the Lord enabled them to persevere and they gained what they hoped in – ultimately through Christ

Conclusion: