

What is True Faith

[Hebrews 10:39-11:3](#)

Hebrews, Day 38

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
- Hebrews 10:39-11:3, ESV

Have you ever been quoted out of context, in such a way that made what you said sound so much different than what you actually meant? I've had the experience, and trust me, it's not fun! Sadly, even the best Christians are guilty of doing this to the Bible all the time.

One of the helpful features of our Bibles is the fact that they're divided into chapters and verses. This makes it very easy for us to teach and discuss the Bible, because we can easily turn to any section of Scripture together. But what is a helpful feature can also sometimes be a hindrance. Sometimes we forget that what is said at the beginning of a chapter needs to be connected to what was said at the end of the previous chapter for us to understand its full meaning.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard Hebrews 11:1 quoted as a definition of faith. It's a good verse to quote for that reason, because it does give us a concise definition of faith - "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" But in isolation, that definition can sound a bit abstract, a bit academic. Hebrews 11:1 begins with the word "now," which makes a strong connection to what was said immediately before it. In other words, Hebrews 11:1 is being said in the context of Hebrews 10:39, as a follow-up explanation of that last verse of chapter 10.

When we remove 11:1 from 10:39, we miss the urgency of the definition of faith. We miss the importance of why saving faith is so vital to understand and have. The opposite of having faith is shrinking back and being destroyed. The opposite of trusting God for what we cannot see is abandoning God, rejecting Christ, and suffering judgment. This context gives the issue of faith a strong relevance to our lives, something that is far from abstract or academic.

So, what does it mean to have faith? It is to have assurance and conviction - literally, the substance and the proof of what God has promised. Faith is absolutely convinced of the reality of that which is physically unseen but has been revealed by God in His word.

Faith looks at the world around us, the world in which we live, and knows that it did not create itself. God spoke the universe into being, from nothing, by the word of His power. People sometimes ask me for proof of God's existence, and I sometimes reply, "Look around you. You live in the midst of the proof. Look at yourself. You are the living proof." People who can look at the sunset and the stars, the human hand and heart, a butterfly on a flower, or a dolphin playing in the ocean and not see God are blind and lacking faith. Logic and evidence will not convince them. They need eyes to see.

Faith is having the eyes to see, and it's a gift of God. It says to God, "I believe," because it knows, it has assurance and conviction. Jesus is both the object of our faith and the giver of our faith, as Hebrews will go on to say in chapter 12. Faith does not shrink back because faith is fully convinced and assured that what God has said is true, more true than what my eyes can see, more true than what the world tells me, and more true than what my flesh desires.

Faith says simply, clearly and confidently: "*Let God be true, and every man a liar.*" (Romans 3:4)