
Words of Truth

Hebrews 11:1

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The previous chapter concluded with a message of continued faithfulness (Hebrews 10:35-39). Within that message they were reminded that the just shall live by faith (Hebrews 10:38; cf. Habakkuk 2:4). That certainly ties into the eleventh chapter of this letter. We will be studying about faith throughout this whole chapter starting with these words: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith begins and is sustained through learning the unadulterated word of God (Romans 1:15-17, Romans 10:5-17, and I Thessalonians 2:13). Faith is a crucial part of our salvation (Mark 16:15-16, John 3:1-36, John 8:23-24, and Hebrews 11:6). The word “faith” is used in various ways throughout the New Testament. Obviously, the word faith is used in discussing salvation (Hebrews 6:9-12). Faith is used in a manner wherein we learn about our system of faith rather than life under the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:16). Even outside of contrasting the Law of Moses to the faith in Christ, the teaching we have obeyed and that we live under is called “the faith” (Acts 6:7, Acts 14:22, Romans 14:1, Colossians 1:23, Titus 1:13, Jude 1:3, etc.). The word “faith” is used in contexts discussing personal convictions regarding authorized liberties (Romans 14:22). The word “faith” appears as a spiritual gift (I Corinthians 12:1-11). The word “faith” is used to describe the people of God (Galatians 6:10). I could list other uses of the word, but you should see the point. We have to be careful when using tools such as concordances to be sure we know how the word is being used in each context.

The word translated “substance” [ὑπόστασις] means: “A setting under (support), i.e. (figuratively) concretely, essence, or abstractly, assurance (objectively or subjectively): — confidence, confident, person, substance. A setting or placing under; thing put under, substructure, foundation; that which has foundation, is firm; that which has actual existence. A substance, real being; the substantial quality, nature, of a person or thing. The steadfastness of mind, firmness, courage, resolution; confidence, firm trust, assurance” (Strong’s # 5287). Aside from the translation here of “substance” the KJV translators have translated this word as “confident” (II Corinthians 9:4), “confidence” (II Corinthians 11:17 and Hebrews 3:14), and “person” (Hebrews 1:3). With the definition of the word, other uses, and how this word is used in the context we are studying; the word “faith” in this passage is best understood as the confidence, the foundation whereupon the faithful live and act. We will see in this chapter the wording of “through faith” and “by faith” over and over again. True faith is what moves God’s people to do the right things the right ways (James 2:14-26).

Faith and hope are inseparable (I Corinthians 13:13 and I Thessalonians 5:8). Our faith and hope is in God (Psalms 71:5 and I Peter 1:18-21). We have one faith and one hope (Ephesians 4:1-6). Our hope is not in this world (Colossians 1:5, Titus 1:1-3, Titus 2:11-14, and Titus 3:7). Our hope lays wait for us in the resurrection (I Peter 1:3-9). Thankfully, we are not like those who have no hope (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). Without the hope of a future resurrection, our hope would not even be in the person of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-23). Among other things, we are saved by proper hope (Romans 8:24-25).

The word translated “evidence” [ἔλεγχος] means: “proof, conviction: — evidence, reproof. A proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested; conviction” (Strong’s # 1650). The only other time we find that Greek word in the New Testament it is translated “reproof” (II Timothy 3:16). Our God does not require blind faith (so to speak). He expects us to prove [test] all things (I Thessalonians 5:21). So, He has provided us with natural evidences of His existence (Acts 14:15-17 and Acts 17:16-30). Throughout the Scriptures God has said things long before man had found them out on their own (Job 26:7, Job 38:16, Ecclesiastes 1:7, Ecclesiastes 11:3, Isaiah 40:22, and Amos 9:6). God provided witness accounts as a testimony of things said and done as evidence for all to read (Acts 2:32, Acts 3:15, Acts 4:33, Acts 7:44, I Corinthians 15:1-8, and Hebrews 2:1-4; cf. John 8:17). God doesn’t do something and allow men to wonder if He did it or not (Isaiah 42:8 and Isaiah 48:11). We should appreciate the fact that God not only allows us to question things, but demands us to do so!

Now let’s consider the things that are not seen. Outside of Jesus, no man that has walked this earth has seen our Heavenly Father (John 1:18 and I John 4:12). Our Heavenly Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the angels are the only ones that inhabit Heaven (I John 5:7 and Matthew 22:30). Those of us alive today have not seen the works the Scriptures testify of. The Scriptures are written so that we can believe (John 20:30-31), but we are not eyewitnesses of those things. Therefore, there is much we have not seen. It is the things we have not seen that God asks us to have faith in (II Corinthians 4:18). Having said all of that, there is an inspired text that I will use that will best summarize this point.

With exception to the earnest of the Spirit that we do not have, consider this: *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him”* (II Corinthians 5:1-9).