

Faith Described (Heb. 11:1) -Warren E. Berkley



The first verse of Hebrews eleven describes faith. Here is the text as it appears in the American Standard Version: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen."

This verse has been called "the definition of faith," and I have no quarrel with that. Personally, I prefer to speak of this verse as A DESCRIPTION OR STATEMENT OF WHAT FAITH DOES. Faith assures us of those things we hope for, and faith convinces us of things we have never seen, and do not see now!

First, think about faith, IN RELATION TO THINGS NOT SEEN.

We have not seen God...

We did not see the world being created...

We were not there, to witness

the great flood...

We did not see the exodus of
Israel out of Egypt

...FURTHER, into the New Testament:

We did not see those great events associated
with the birth of Christ...

No one living today saw John the Baptist...

And, we were not eye witnesses of the death,
burial and resurrection of Christ.

But when we read about all these things, and ponder the many infallible proofs - CONCLUDING THESE THINGS ACTUALLY HAPPENED -- that's faith! We were not there! One of our songs grants the point: "We saw thee not...." But we've studied the Word of God, and on the strength of evidences - WE KNOW THESE THINGS HAPPENED, even though we were not there.

Faith, one translation says, "MAKES US CERTAIN OF REALITIES WE DO NOT SEE!" (NEB). But not only does faith enable us to accept the realities of the past that we didn't witness [but have evidence of] ... FAITH ALSO EMBRACES THE OBJECT OF PROMISES MADE, or "things hoped for!"

There is the need to clarify this phrase: "things hoped for." This doesn't mean - just anything we might wish for in the future ... a big promotion on your job; an inheritance that would make you rich in the things of this world.

THE LIVING BIBLE SAYS: "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen." This is not a correct translation of the actual text written by inspiration. This is a corrupted paraphrase.

When we look at the phrase, "things hoped for" in verse 1, WE OUGHT NOT TO THINK OF THE WISHES OF MEN ... but rather, THE PROMISES OF GOD!!

Two references in the Hebrew epistle will help identify "THINGS HOPED FOR." For clarification, refer to ...

Hebrews 6:17-20

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise

the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."The things we hope for are the things God has promised, or "the hope set before us." (See "one hope," in Eph. 4:4).

Hebrews 7:18,10

"For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." Note this phrase, "the bringing in of a better hope." The hope of the Christian is not a generic thing; not just whatever you want in the future. It is specific; the "one hope" God has "set before us." A better hope.

So this phrase "things hoped for" in Heb. 11:1 is a reference to those things we have reason to hope for, because God has promised them.

The second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the dead; the happy outcome of judgment for the faithful ... then an entrance into heaven. NOW WE ARE NOT THERE YET! But faith assures us - these objects of our hope will be there ready for our enjoyment, in due time. When we believe and affirm as a fact, that which hasn't happened yet ... that's faith.

Faith is being described in Heb. 11:1, in terms of what it does! Faith looks back to things already past, that we didn't see --- AND FAITH EMBRACES THOSE AS REAL, on the basis of the evidence; the testimony we have (see Acts 1:3; Jno. 20:30,31; Rom. 10:17). Likewise, faith looks ahead, to things promised; and while those good things are NOT HERE YET ... we know they will happen, by faith. "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Faith is DESCRIBED, in Heb. 11:1.

There is all kinds of confusion in the religious world about faith ... but here, it is described in Heb. 11:1.

Some believe that faith is a blind, unquestioning attitude that leads a person to accept the most ridiculous things either without evidence, or in

spite of all the evidence.

Others think - faith is an inexpressible gift, which is injected by God into the heart ... whether you desire it or not.

Some believe - faith is obtained only after hours, perhaps days and weeks, of praying at the "mourner's bench." It appears - there is nothing more misunderstood in all the Bible. But here it is ... described in Heb. 11:1 --- "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen."

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