

ST. JOHN DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

August 11-13, 2020

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Series Subject:

What We Believe About Faith (8/11/2020)

As Christians and children of God and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, **faith** is foundational and fundamental. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), we are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10) and we are, as a customary practice of Christians, to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). It seems fitting, then, to look at **WHAT WE BELIEVE: ABOUT FAITH**.

In order to do this, let's begin with: **A DESCRIPTION OF FAITH**.

Hebrews 11: 1-2---"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report."

There are, therefore, three movements in these marvelous verses to which I want to point first. They are 1) The Character of Faith, 2) The Consequences of Faith and 3) The Commendation of Faith.

I. Let's look, first of all, at THE CHARACTER OF FAITH.

1. Let's commence with the first three words, according to the King James Version---"Now faith is..."
 2. This 11th chapter of Hebrews is "the great faith chapter", in the Scriptures.
 3. It was primarily written to encourage persecuted Hebrew Christians to continue in the faith and has been an encouragement to the redeemed family of God ever since.
- A. Many people would define **faith** as some wistful hope or premonition that something good is going to happen in their endeavors.
- B. But faith is not a feeling, like the line from "Oklahoma":

O what a beautiful morning,

O what a beautiful day.

I've got a wonderful feeling,

Everything's going my way.

- C. Faith is more than that. Faith is not optimism or positive thinking or a hunch.
- D. Faith is not a blind leap or a blank check or a brainless choice.
- a. Listen again to verse 1 of Hebrews 11... "Now faith is" ---the words point to **the Character of Faith**.

- b. There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, as relates to the **character** or **nature of faith**.
 - c. It is the only 'definition' or 'definite description' of **faith**, which is attempted in the Scriptures.
 - d. Actually, this is more a description of what faith does and how it works than a definition of what faith is.
 - e. Faith, as far as **character** goes, has been described as a mathematical problem: faith adds power, faith subtracts weaknesses, faith divides difficulties and faith multiplies possibilities.
 - f. **Hebrews 11** begins with a general statement of what faith really does and how it acts in character, nature and action.
- Faith is the common denominator of life. No one can live a single day without exercising faith of some sort and in some way.
 - The Saints' Hall of Fame, The Heroes and Heroines of Faith, The Honor Roll of the Old Testament Saints, The Westminster Abbey of Scripture and The Faith Chapter; are but a few titles that have been given Hebrews chapter 11.

The opening words of Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1---deal, among other things, with The **Character of Faith**.

II. But then, secondly, let's look at THE CONSEQUENCES OF

FAITH.

1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
2. Listen, now, sisters and brothers, because the results and effects of faith are put forth right here...that is...the positive consequences of faith are forwarded.
3. Faith is the substance of which things are hoped. The word 'substance' is translated from the compound Greek word 'hupostasis'. Amen. "Hupo" means under. And "stasis" is from the word that means to stand.
4. Combined, the word means that which stands under or the foundation.
 - a. Faith is therefore the ground upon which one builds hope!
 - b. It represents 'the whole body of documents bearing on the ownership of a person's property, deposited in the archives, and forming the proof of ownership'.
 - c. "In essence, faith is the title-deed of things hoped for". It is the firm grasp of faith on unseen fact.
 - d. That is why faith calms our fears and faith cushions our falls and faith confirms our future and faith claims God's finest and faith challenges our failures.
 - e. Faith is the substance of things hoped for...but from whence does the hope come?
 - The hope, like the faith, comes from God!
 - God, through His Word, promises certain things and we---through faith---look with eager anticipation for and look forward to those very things.

- Faith is therefore believing in the Word of God as being true and believing it to the extent that you act accordingly.

- In other words, faith is being sure of what we hope for...because of Who promised it!

A) And then, faith is the evidence of things not seen.

B) The word 'evidence' is translated from the Greek word "*elegchos*" and means a proof, and so that by which a thing is proved or tested.

C) Faith is that by which invisible things---things invisible to us---are proven and we are convinced of their reality. The proof is in the Word of God, faith simply appropriates the proof. Yes, faith gives proof and conviction concerning the things that are not seen. Listen to another translation---Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

D) Faith brings the future within the present and makes the invisible seen.

E) Eyesight produces a conviction about objects in the physical world. Faith produces the same convictions for the invisible order. Faith brings visual certitude so that we are certain of what we do not see.

***Faith is the outstretched hand of the soul receiving what God has promised! We have considered **The Character of Faith** and **The Consequences of Faith**.

III. Let's conclude today with THE COMMENDATION OF FAITH.

1. Look then at verse 2---For by it the elders obtained a good report. The NIV reads---This is what the ancients were commended for.

2. As you can see, the NIV picks up on this matter of **Faith's Commendation**.

3. The elders...the ancients...the Old Testament saints were commended for their faith. But by whom were they commended?

4. God commended them. God commended their faith.

A. God gave them a good report card, because of their faith.

B. The heroes and heroines of the Old Testament had their faith put to the test and passed with flying colors.

C. You see, sisters and brothers, a faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.

D. They persevered by holding on to God's not yet seen promises regardless of opposition, temptation and persecution.

E. God gave His approval to their faith.

F. God has always approved and recognized faith.