

How Faith Acts in Our Lives

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Hebrews 11:1-3; 8-16

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Over the next few weeks we will be unpacking the concept of Faith as found in Hebrews 11 and 12. We often call this the Pillars of Faith chapters as we read about the many Old Testament saints and recount how they lived by faith in God and the many ways God rewarded them through the ages. Yes, to some extent our own faith comes from seeing the ways God has worked in their lives. But faith is more than believing the testimony of others. According to Hebrews 11:1-2 it really consists of three things.

1. Substance or assurance
2. Conviction or evidence
3. Witness or testimony

First let us look at the substance or foundation of faith.

Now I am not an architect like Ed Bolt but any person who has basic knowledge and understanding of physics understands the importance of a good foundation. You need a firm bedrock to lay your foundations upon so that what you construct will withstand the test of time and stresses of life.

This concept of having a firm and sound base upon which you build is present in today's opening verse in Hebrews 11. Verse 1 says "now faith is the assurance of things hoped for." This word assurance found here can also be translated as substance or foundation. We talk sometimes about the substance of character in

which we put our trust. So, we need to ask ourselves “what is our faith built upon or made of? What is the source of our faith?”

The Greek word for substance or assurance here is the Greek word *Hupostasis*. It is used three times in the book of Hebrews. The first time it appears is in the first chapter and is describing Jesus as the substance or basis of our faith.

Hebrews 1:1-3a says:

“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom God also created the worlds. Jesus is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and God sustains or supports all things by this powerful word.”

So here we are reminded that our faith is first and foremost built upon the belief and faith that Jesus is God, the creator of all that was, is and shall be, who spoke the worlds into being, as we hear also in John’s Gospel, chapter 1:1-4.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

The next time *Hupostasis* is used in Hebrews is in Hebrews 3:14 “For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence (or substance) firm to the end.” Here we are reminded that we also play a vital role in our own faith. We are called upon to hold onto our first convictions, the basis or foundation of our faith which is Jesus, the hope of our salvation and are called to actively live and abide by those convictions.

Here we find the second element of faith - conviction or evidence that proves what we believe. We share in this evidence in faith because of the transformative power of faith in our own lives. It is that element of a changed life that leads us and fuels our faith even more. This is why Christianity is more than a religion, it is a lifestyle a way of being in the world, because it shapes our orientation to how we live.

Going back to that concept of building upon the rock, let us look at Matthew 7:24-27 where that parable is used.

Jesus says, “Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built their house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish person who built their house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” Here Jesus is reminding us that unless we apply the teachings and principles of faith taught by Jesus we will fail to build or establish our faith on solid ground.

According to the writer of Hebrews putting our faith into practice is evidence that we believe and trust the teachings of Christ and are living according to them in faith. This conviction of faith feeds the hope of future coming of things yet not seen. Our faith in the coming promises of God to heal and restore the earth once again.

Finally, we hear in Hebrews 11:3 that we can look to others as witnesses of faith to fortify our own faith. We can point to people like Abraham who also believed in

the promises of God. They are testimonies or witnesses of God's faithfulness throughout time, working to restore and heal all of creation. Abraham was promised that his descendants would be a blessing to all the world. It was a promise that would expand throughout time. Even though he could hardly imagine what that meant, Abraham believed God and even saw the very first of many promises fulfilled with the birth of Isaac. His great faith saw far into the future beyond his own lifetime.

Through our faith in Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith, we continue to live a life of faith so that the promises of God can be fulfilled.

So, as we begin to unpack the meaning of faith from Hebrews 11 and 12 in the coming weeks I ask you to consider these questions, "Is Jesus the substance and foundation of your faith? Do you hold fast to the convictions of faith and live a life worthy of Christ? And do you look to the testimonies of faith found in others to strengthen your faith in God through Jesus?"