

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 6 February 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Hall of Faith

Hebrews 11:1-3

At the end of **Hebrews 10**, the Apostle Paul made this powerful statement: ***“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”***

This is a very key verse in the book of **Hebrews**. Why is it so important? Well, as you’ll remember, in chapters one through ten, Paul focused on the *doctrine* concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ; but then, in the middle of chapter ten, Paul began to shift his focus from *doctrine* to *practice*. Paul is now showing us how to *apply* all that Christology to our daily lives; and in **chapter 11**, he gets down to the real heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is this: **in order to apply the doctrine of Christ to our daily living, we must exercise *faith*.**

Chapter 11 has often been called “The Hall of Faith.” In order to encourage the Jewish believers who were undergoing persecution for their faith in Christ, Paul is reminding them of many great men and women who lived by faith—people such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, and so on. These people have often been called “heroes of faith”; however, if these people were here with us this morning, I guarantee that they would *not* own themselves as “heroes.” These people weren’t “super-believers” who were able to do things that others couldn’t: they were people just like you and me, who trusted God enough to let Him perform His will *through them*. They lived their lives by faith.

Now, in **chapter 11**, Paul doesn’t focus so much on the *Object* of our faith as he does on *faith itself*. He has already spent 10 chapters in showing us that Jesus is our God and High Priest, and that He is the One who should be the Object of our faith; but now, he is showing us what faith in Christ really looks like. **He is showing us what faith is; what it does; and what its results are.** He doesn’t merely give us a “textbook definition” of faith; rather, he shows us, through the testimony of many Old Testament believers, what *real faith* will produce in your life.

What is faith? How can you describe it? That is what we are about to learn, as we delve into **Hebrews 11**. The title of this message is, ***“The Hall of Faith.”***

Read Hebrews 11:1-2.

From this passage, I would first like to point out...

I. The nature of faith (vv. 1-2).

Paul starts off his description of faith with a powerful statement: ***“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.”*** That’s interesting, isn’t it? Faith is not something physical. It’s not something that you can see or touch. How, then, is *faith* the ***“substance”*** of things hoped for?

To get a better idea of Paul's meaning, let's see how the word "**substance**" is used in other Scriptures. The Greek word for "substance" is *hupostasis*; and there are two other places in **Hebrews** where this word is used. Let's take a look at them.

Read Hebrews 1:3.

In this verse, Paul uses the word *hupostasis*; and in this context, it is translated into our English Bible as "**person.**" You see, *hupostasis* has the idea of "the real essence or *substance* of something." What Paul is saying, then, is that Jesus is the same essence, or substance, as His Father. Simply put, He is the "**express image**" of the Father's *Person*. By the way, the Greek word for "**express image**" is a powerful word, as well. The word for "**express image**" is *charakter*; and *charakter* refers to the image that a seal stamps into soft wax. Just as the image in the wax is identical to the image on the seal, so Christ's essence is identical to that of His Father. They are two distinct Persons, yet one God. They are of the same substance.

With this in mind, let's look at the other verse in **Hebrews** where *hupostasis* is used, and see what it means.

Read Hebrews 3:14.

In this verse, the word *hupostasis* is translated as "**confidence.**" Paul is exhorting Christians to hold their *hupostasis*, or "confidence," steadfast until the end.

Now, "**person**" and "**confidence**" seem like two very different ideas. How are these two words translated from the same Greek word? What is the connection between these two ideas? Well, think about the way they were used. In **Hebrews 1:3**, *hupostasis* means "substance." Here, Paul is telling us that Christ is of the same "substance," or "**person,**" as His Father. Yet, in **Hebrews 3:14**, *hupostasis* has the idea of "**confidence**" in something. "Substance" refers to something that is solid, and real; but "confidence" refers to one's *faith* that something is real. Though "confidence" is not something that you can see and touch, it *can* be "solid," in the sense that it is "unwavering."

Do you see now why Paul says, "**Faith is the substance of things hoped for**"? Christ is the "hupostasis," or "substance," of my faith. He is not merely an idea: He is real flesh and blood. He is the real, solid Object of my faith. Therefore, my "hupostasis" (my confidence) in Jesus is also real, and solid. My confidence in Him is solid and unchanging, just as He is! Because *Christ* is solid and immutable, *my faith* in Him is solid and immutable. He is worthy of my complete faith and confidence. My faith in Him is so solid, that it is as though my faith were an actual, physical "substance"! That is why Jesus gave Simon the new name "Peter" (which means "little rock"). Every time Simon was called by his new name "Peter," he was reminded that Christ wanted his faith to be real, solid, and unbending.

Even though we cannot see Jesus, our confidence in Him is not a wavering and uncertain thing. It is not fuzzy, foggy, or hazy. It is "rock solid." It is substantial. I don't know about you, but I am not *fairly certain* that my Redeemer liveth: I *know* that my Redeemer liveth! Though I have not seen Him with my physical eyes, I have seen Him by faith, with my spiritual eyes. Job never saw his Redeemer, either: he lived and died about 1,700 years before

Jesus was born! Yet, in faith, Job declared, *“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth”* (Job 19:25).

If you are saved, you have placed your confidence in Christ to save your soul from sin, death, and hell. In regard to your salvation, your confidence in Him is rock-solid. However, what about other areas of life? Is your confidence in Christ solid when it comes to trusting Him with your family problems, or with your finances, or with your deepest hurts and anxieties? What about those huge, perplexing, life-altering decisions, or those everyday, mundane, seemingly “manageable” decisions? Do you trust Him to deliver you from those strong, delusive temptations, or to give you strength to witness for His name? Should your faith in any of these areas be lacking, **Hebrews 11** is just what you need to strengthen your faith! Study these men and women of faith in **Hebrews 11** carefully, and ask God to increase your confidence in Him! A Christian with weak faith will always be double-minded, unstable, and unprepared to navigate through the strong breakers of life!

Read James 1:5-8.

For the child of God, the bottom line is that we are to *“walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 **Corinthians 5:7**). Jesus told Thomas, *“Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”* (John 20:29). Peter said that even though we have not seen Jesus, we love Him; and though now we *“see him not, yet believing,”* we *“rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”*

Too many Christians are trusting Jesus for their salvation, but are not walking the daily walk of faith, as they encounter daily trials and problems. In fact, because there is so much lack of faith (and lack of sound biblical teaching) today, many Christians are being drawn into dangerous spiritual practices, which are devilish counterfeits of true faith!

For example, many Christians are being drawn into the practice of **“mantra prayers.”** The idea behind “mantra prayers” is that you pray certain words (such as “love,” “peace,” “God,” or “Jesus”) over and over again in a whisper, with controlled breathing in and out, until you begin to “feel” the presence of God. Many Christians are also being spiritually seduced to practice **“contemplative prayer,”** or **“centring prayer.”** This is an ancient monkish idea, which goes back to the so-called “Desert Fathers” of the third and fourth centuries. The idea behind “contemplative” or “centring” prayers is that you should put all thought out of your mind, and seek to descend into complete mental and spiritual “silence” at the centre of your being, so that you can “soak in” the presence of God in the silence. Still other Christians are being drawn into a “christianised” form of **“visualisation.”** This means that you close your eyes and create a strong “visual image” of God or of Jesus in your mind, so that God can speak to you through the image that you have created in your mind. Many people report having extremely real and vivid conversations with “Jesus”--so real, in fact, that they are convinced that Jesus has, indeed, appeared to them in person, and spoken with them.

I have no doubt that at least some of you have encountered these ideas, because the modern “evangelical” world is rife with such heresies today. Brethren, **avoid all these ideas like the black plague!** They are wicked! These practices are nothing but pagan mysticism; and they are rapidly drawing people back toward the Babylonian system from which they sprang! The

apostate, one-world religion is in the making before our very eyes; and these ancient pagan ideas are doing a tremendous job in preparing people for a universal, apostate “spirituality.”

Using any kind of physical or visual “technique” to try to have a more real “encounter” with God is an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His precious blood, rose from the grave, and ascended back to the right hand of His Father as our High Priest, so that you could come directly to Him in prayer! Christians don’t reach God through mental “techniques”! As we have seen throughout the book of **Hebrews**, we approach Christ by *faith alone*, with full confidence that Christ has removed the barrier between us and Him! As God’s people, we must put this doctrine to practice by placing our firm, unwavering *faith* in His promise!

Read 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.

Read Colossians 2:8-10.

Faith in Christ truly is “*simplicity*.” There is no labyrinth of physical or mental rituals or techniques by which we must approach the Lord. We approach Him through simple faith in His complete work on the cross. We who know Christ are “complete” because Christ has paid for our sins in full; and we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us! Paul said, “*In him* (Christ) *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*” Simply put, Christ is Almighty God! Therefore, we who are “in Christ” have everything that we need! That is why Paul goes on to say, “*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.*” Since Christ dwells in us, we are always in His presence; and we have all that we need! The only thing hindering full communion with Him is sin in our lives; but this hindrance is removed the instant we confess and forsake our sins. Fellowship with the Lord truly is “simple”!

Why, then, are Christians today exchanging this blessed simplicity for idolatrous lies? Conjuring up mental “images” of Jesus in order to have a more “real” experience with Him is just as idolatrous as bowing down to a stone idol of Jesus. It is an insult to God, and an open invitation to demons to influence your mind! The Lord Jesus will not communicate with you through a mental image that you have erected in your mind! (And if *He* won’t communicate with you through that image, you may be sure that some other spirit out there would be glad to oblige you!) We cannot possibly imagine God, nor can we conjure Him up by creating a mental image of Him! To attempt to do so is to commit idolatry! As for “centring prayer” and “contemplative prayer,” we do not *empty* our minds in order to have a “more real” encounter with God; instead, God commands us to *fill* our minds with His written Word. God speaks to us through His Word; and we speak to Him in simple prayer. Seeking a silent place where you can talk with God without distractions is fine; but emptying your mind of rational thought, and seeking to “find” God in that mental void, is something entirely different. This is nothing but Hinduism re-packaged as “Christianity”; and it is extremely dangerous. If you seek to “encounter” God in this way, you just may get a real “encounter.” However, the spirit that you encounter won’t be God’s Holy Spirit; it will be a lying spirit.

Brethren, we must realise that we are subject to God, and to His will! He is not subject to us, nor to any physical, created thing! We must come to Him by the way that He has provided—and that way is the one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our part is simply to *believe* on Him. To add anything else to faith as we approach Him is to tread on dangerous ground!

The TV and internet are filled with false teachers who have turned the biblical teaching of faith on its head. True faith is *total submission* to God and His will, and trust in His promises. In contrast, many false teachers have made “faith” into something by which *God* is subject to *us*. According to these teachers, faith is some kind of “force” or “energy”—something that can be “tapped into.” They say that when a Christian taps into this force called “faith,” he has *power to create things with his words*, just as God does. (This teaching actually puts God on our level, since God Himself would have to “tap into” this same “force” in order to have power in *His* words!) These teachers say that if a Christian will just believe in this “word-faith” force, he can actually *decree* things to happen, and they will happen! Therefore, they say that you must make “*positive confessions*,” so that *positive* things will happen to you.

My friends, this is a spiritually lethal falsehood! We cannot “decree” *anything*! Even when we verbally claim the authority of Jesus Christ, we are able to do so only upon the basis of what our Master has revealed to us in His Word, and not by our own arbitrary will. Words are not some kind of “power” that can be wielded like a wand when we tap into the magical thing called “faith.” We have no power to create anything. We have no power to make good things happen, or to keep bad things from happening. In all things, we are subject to God, who is sovereign and all-powerful. We can approach God with confidence, and bring our petitions to Him; but we must always pray “*according to His will*.”

True faith is submission to our sovereign Lord. True faith is surrender to His will. True faith is trusting and clinging to His promises; humbling petitioning Him; and then trusting that He will truly perform what is best, whether it is what we expected or not.

Read Matthew 6:9-10.

Read 1 John 5:14.

Now, let’s get back to the **second part of Hebrews 11:1**. (**Read Hebrews 11:1**.) Paul says that faith is “*the evidence of things not seen*.” What does this mean? Well, as we’ve already seen, this does *not* mean that you should “visualize” a mental image of what you cannot see, so that you can place your faith in it. This is actually the *opposite* of faith! Visualisation is trusting in what you “see” in your mind, because you’ve created an image of it; but *faith* is trusting in what you *cannot* see.

What else does this statement in **Hebrews 11:1** *not* mean? It does *not* mean that “things are true because *I believe* them.” **Things are true because *God* says they are true**, not because *I* believe them to be true. It’s not, “God said it; I believe it; that settles it”: rather, it is “God said it; that settles it!” When a believer places his faith in the objective truths in God’s Word, he has all the “evidence” he needs—even though he can’t see it with his eyes, or touch it.

Now, let’s look at this verse more closely. (**Read Hebrews 11:1 again**.) In what should we, as Christians, place our faith? Paul mentions two things. For one thing, we must place our faith in things “*hoped for*.” Things “*hoped for*” are future things--events which have not been fulfilled yet. God has given us many promises for the future, for which there is no physical evidence—things such as the Resurrection of our bodies, Christ’s return in glory, the 1,000-year Kingdom, our home in Heaven, our rewards in Heaven, and so on. We cannot see these promises; but by faith, we wait and hope for them, with full assurance of faith.

Read Romans 8:22-25.

Now, there is one other thing in which we must place our faith. Paul also says that faith is the evidence of **“things not seen.”** **“Things not seen”** are *spiritual realities* that we possess right now, at this present time--but which we cannot see. What kind of things are these? They are spiritual privileges such as being “born again” into God’s family; having our sins washed away; the privilege of prayer; Christ’s high-priestly intercession for us; and so on. We cannot see these things; but by faith, we believe them.

Now, if you think it hard to believe in things that are not seen, just think of what it would have been like for the Old Testament saints! There are still many future events in which we must place our faith (such as the Rapture, the resurrection, and Christ’s Second Coming to earth); but the Old Testament saints never even witnessed Christ’s *first* coming to earth! Though the Messiah had not yet come to earth even *once*, they placed their unwavering faith in the promise that the Messiah *would* come, and that He would take care of their sin problem! Their faith was so strong, that they allowed God to construct their whole lives around these promises; and because of their faith, they **“obtained a good report.”** Their faith has been recorded in Scripture for all to see and learn from. **(Read Hebrews 11:2 again.)**

What kind of “report” are *you* amassing, Christian? Do your friends, loved ones, and acquaintances read the “report” of your life, and see that you truly are trusting God to perform things “not seen as yet”? Do your children see that? Do your unsaved family members see that? Most importantly, does *God* see that “good report” in your heart?

The nature of faith is that it is solid and unwavering. In closing, we will examine...

II. The Object of faith (v. 3)

(Read verse 3.) Paul’s message is clear: it is by *faith* that we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. Yet, *how*, exactly, can we place our faith in this truth? How can we *know* that about 6,000 years ago, God created the entire universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing)? Paul said, **“Things that are seen were not made of things which do appear.”** In other words, this physical universe, which we see with our eyes, was created by an invisible God. How can we *know* this to be true, when no human being was there to see God in the beginning, nor to witness His creation of the universe, and record it?

Many Christians would answer that “There is plenty of scientific evidence that the Bible is true”: and, to be sure, there is *much* evidence. We can produce mounds of proof of the historical validity of the Scriptures; or the world-wide Flood; or the young age of the earth; or the impossibility of the complex systems of nature evolving by a process. It *is* important that we be prepared to defend the validity of the Scriptures to a sceptical world; and there is plenty of historical and scientific evidence that we can cite. Nevertheless, no one was there to *witness* that one-time event when God said, “Let there be light,” and there *was* light. We must simply take God’s Word on it. **The Word of God, and not physical evidence, must be the Object of our Faith!**

Now, of course, there *was* one Person who was there to witness the Creation: and that Person is Christ, the Creator Himself, who later stepped into creation and took on human flesh; and *His* name just happens to be **“the Word of God.”** The written Word of God, and the *living* Word of God, Jesus Christ, *must be* the Object of our faith! No other object of faith will do.

We live in a world that says, “It doesn’t really matter what you believe—just so that you have faith in *something*.” My friends, this notion is not only foolish; it is lethal, and damning! A person may have all the faith in the world that Mary will save him; but this is utterly contrary to the Word of God. The Bible says of Jesus, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”** Those who trust in Mary, or in anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, will suffer God’s eternal wrath! A person may have all the faith in the world that he will get to Heaven because he is a good person; but this is utterly contrary to the Word of God. The Bible says of Jesus, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”** Those who trust in their own goodness will suffer eternal punishment for their sin, because they did not repent and believe on the Son of God.

Now, let’s make this personal for believers. Christian, you believe that God created the world out of nothing. You believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour; and you are trusting in Him to get you to the world to come. Yet, how far do you trust Him with your life in *this* world? Christ is the Creator of this world; and He is completely in charge of everything that happens within it. That’s why Paul says that **“the worlds were framed by the word of God.”** The word **“worlds”** is translated from the Greek word *aion*; and *aion* can apply not just to the *material* universe, but also to the *time* element of the universe. Usually this word refers to the “ages” of the world. It refers to the dispensations of time in earth’s history, and to *everything that happens within those ages!*

Do *you* believe that God has framed the ages, Christian? Do you *really* believe it? Yes, you believe that there was a pre-Fall dispensation, and a pre-Flood dispensation, and a patriarchal dispensation, and the Old Testament dispensation, and the church dispensation; and you believe that there will be a future seven-year Tribulation, and a 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ on earth, and an eternal state in the New Heaven and New Earth that God will create. You believe that God has sovereignly guided all these dispensations of history exactly according to His plan, and that He will bring man’s history to its consummation, exactly as He has revealed in His Word. You believe all these things (as you should)! **Yet**, do you believe that God is sovereignly in control of *your own* life? Do you really believe that He is guiding your life, and that He has a perfect will for your life, to which He wants you to submit? Do you believe that God has things that He wants you to do every day, and that you must seek His face in order to know what He wants you to do? Do you believe that **“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose”**? Or do you often fail to recognise God’s providential direction and care in your life?

If it be the latter, you are not alone. Even the men and women of faith of whom we read in **Hebrews 11** often lost sight of God’s plan in their daily lives. They often failed, too. However, they also repented, and got right with the Lord. They kept their eyes on a **“city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”** They viewed this life as a brief and passing sojourn; and after making that journey by faith, they obtained a **“good report.”**

Conclusion: Real faith is solid and unwavering; and real faith has as its Object God's Word, and God's Son. In what are *you* trusting? **Perhaps you are not saved.** Perhaps all your life you have been trusting in things other than Jesus Christ to get you to Heaven—things such as religion, your own good works, and rituals. Perhaps today you are beginning to see that you haven't had the faintest idea what true faith is, or of what its true object should be. If you have never truly placed your trust in what Christ did for you, won't you do so today? **Perhaps you are saved, but you realise that your faith in your daily life is scant.** You are trusting Christ for your salvation; but your faith in other areas is weak and wavering. If so, why don't you ask Him to increase your faith today?