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In Hebrews 11:1 we find the definition of faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The NIV translation says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

What does Scripture say that faith is? First, it says that faith is the substance. It is being sure of whatever it is that we hope for. Faith is so real it is called substance. Substance is the material of which something is made, the building blocks of it. Your faith is the substance, the building blocks of God's promises! The Greek word used for this particular word substance is *hupostasis*. *Hupostasis* means "that which stands under," the basis of something or that which supports the thing.

To understand further, we can look at the other ways the word substance, or *hupostasis*, is used in the Bible. In Hebrews 1:3 NASB it says, "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." The Greek word used here for nature is the same word substance or *hupostasis*. In other words, this verse is saying that God, who is eternal and invisible, became visible—became of substance—in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the exact representation of the Invisible, Almighty God. The substance—Jesus—is the real God in human form. Just like Jesus is the substance of God who is invisible, faith is the substance of those things that we hope for that are invisible.

From the second part of Hebrews 11:1, we see that faith is the "evidence of things not seen." In a courtroom, the judge and jury expect to see some type of evidence proving that whatever a person is charged with is indeed true. The evidence presented determines the outcome of the case. Your faith is also the evidence, determining the outcome of what you are believing for.

Faith directly relates to the invisible, to things that we cannot see with our eyes or handle with our senses. When I was learning about faith years ago, this was the place where the Lord first opened my eyes—that my five senses, no matter how hard I try, will not be able to explain faith or put it into practice and use. Faith is not dealing with what I can see with my eyes or touch with my hands. For example, consider the verse in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." I don't know how to figure this out. How in the world, with my natural senses, can I just believe and be saved? It is totally outside of my logic and my senses, something I cannot comprehend with my mind. Our senses only relate to this visible world. But faith takes us beyond the visible to the invisible, to the underlying reality by which the whole universe was formed, which is by the Word of God. Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

God and His Word

Faith deals exclusively with believing God and His Word. It is with this foundation that biblical faith is distinguished from all else. We may say, "Oh, I believe in that politician. I believe in this make of car. I believe in this medicine because it worked for me." This kind of belief is based on our past experience, what we have seen with our eyes or understood with our minds. Unlike this type of belief, the faith that brings about the promises of God is powerful only because of whom the faith is placed in.

God's very nature and character is faithfulness and goodness. He is always constant and true. So is His Word. Neither He nor His Word will ever change. "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). And God watches over His Word to make sure it comes to pass. Isaiah 55:10-11 says, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Because of this truth, we can confidently believe God, knowing that He does not change, that He is full of goodness and that what He said in His Word will happen!

True Faith

Faith is not denying what is happening in your life or what you are experiencing. It is not pretending that you do not see the dangers or the problems before you. Like I mentioned earlier, Caleb and Joshua saw the strength of those who inhabited the Promised Land. They did not deny that the cities were fortified or that the giants were real. Faith is not denying that you are sick when you are horribly ill. It is not denying that your finances have run short when you are out of funds. Rather, faith is seeing all the problems before you with your earthly eyes, yet not using those eyes to see the solution. God is greater than every difficult situation we face. Faith sees God for who He is, for His ability and for His promises, and believes on Him in the midst of all the difficulties known. By faith we are able to look beyond the problems and solutions of man to see Him who is invisible and can do the impossible!

Do It God's Way

From the world's perspective, faith often looks foolish and illogical. But faith trusts God to do what He has promised, no matter how foolish the steps He asks us to take may seem. There is nothing of man's way in faith. Faith led David to face a giant with a simple slingshot and five stones (see 1 Samuel 17). Faith led Joshua to command a makeshift army to walk around a walled city, blowing trumpets and shouting for their victory (see Joshua 6). Please put yourself in these men's place for a moment and realize how humbling or frightening these things must have been. But remember, no matter how foolish or ridiculous Joshua and the children of Israel looked while walking around the city of Jericho for seven days, it was by their faith that the walls did come down! In the end, faith always wins out!

In 2 Kings 5 the story is told of Naaman the leper who was sent to Elisha the prophet to be healed of his leprosy. When he arrived at the prophet's door, Naaman was told, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean" (v. 10).

But Naaman didn't like that solution. The Jordan River was just some distant, muddy water to him. In verses 11–12 we are told that "Naaman became furious, and went away and said, 'Indeed, I said to myself, "He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy." Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage."

The ways of God seemed foolish to Naaman—so much so that he stormed away from the prophet's home, still a leper. Naaman responded with human logic. He thought he knew the best way for his healing to happen, and when he heard something as foolish as dipping in some distant river, he wouldn't accept it. Just when he was about to return home, his servants met him saying, "If the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:13–14).

When we do it God's way, believing Him above the ways of man and our own reasoning, we will see the power of God at work and will receive the promises of God. Remember that "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

It Is Simple

Jesus says, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Little children believe with reckless abandon. If a father tells his son to jump from a burning, two-story building, the son will jump. He will not stand there and think about physics and gravity and calculate if his father is strong enough to catch him. He doesn't reason with logic and think, "I might hurt myself. Maybe I should look for another way down." No. He simply jumps in faith. Someone he trusts said to do it, so the son jumps and is saved. We need to be like this—trusting God so completely, so confidently. We must learn to lean on His understanding rather than our own (see Proverbs 3).

A complex, reasoned faith doesn't cure leprosy, kill giants or cause walls to crumble. A complex faith only imprisons us in a maze of theological wonderland. I am not saying to run out and do things that don't make sense. I am not saying to think of some ridiculous thing you want and believe for it. Some extreme groups preach this false kind of faith. They say just pray it and claim it and God will send an angel to bring the Rolls Royce or whatever elaborate thing you may want. That is not faith—it is madness. That is feeding the desires of the flesh in the name of faith. You can't use faith to get what you want for yourself. Faith only brings to you what God wants for you.

Have faith in God—the kind of faith that David had, the faith that defeats huge giants with simple stones. Let God do w

hat He has promised to do. Listen to what He says in His Word and follow it. Even if you can't understand it fully, do it. Don't be like Naaman and let your reasoning postpone the promises of God at work in your life. Believe Him and step out in faith. Faith throws itself onto God and holds Him to His character and His Word. Faith never fails because God never fails.

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