

## Faith Defined

In the original Greek, faith has three meanings.

### Meaning One

The first meaning refers not to what is in our mind: knowledge, but to what is in our heart: faith, faithful, faithfulness, belief, believe, trust, entrust, trustworthy, confidence, fidelity. (Ro 10:10) That one we all easily understand.

**(Mark 9:24)** Immediately the child's father cried out and said: "I have faith! Help me out where I need faith!"

The first half of Hebrews 11:1 describes this first meaning:

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Faith is the assured expectation

Faith is an "*assured expectation*", that is to say, a complete confidence in a future event. The original Greek (hypostasis) for "*assured expectation*" refers to a certainty of belief.

### Meaning Two

The second meaning of faith refers to our actions that show our faith.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** (Faith is) the evident demonstration

An evident (elenchos = a proof) demonstration is an explicit act that gives proof of something. Faith is a certainty of belief, shown to be so by acts of faith, that is to say, shown to be so by an evident demonstration of our belief. This part of the verse explains that in addition to a belief, faith is an "*evident demonstration*," that is to say, visible actions.

**(Matthew 9:2)** And look! they were bringing him a paralyzed man lying on a stretcher. On seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic: "Take courage, child! Your sins are forgiven."

**(Luke 5:20)** When he saw their faith, he said: "Man, your sins are forgiven."

**(1 Timothy 5:12)** And they will incur judgment because they have abandoned their first expression of faith.

**(Jude 5)** Although you are fully aware of all of this, I want to remind you that Jehovah, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those not showing faith.

**(James 2:18)** Nevertheless, someone will say: "You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

James doesn't say 'I will perform works that show you I have faith.' He says "*I will show you my faith by my works.*" They could see his works. Therefore they could see his faith.

## Meaning Three

The third meaning of the word faith refers to Christianity itself, as a religion or creed. Or as Paul referred to it at Acts 9:2, "*The Way*", written with capital letters because it is a pro-noun, that is to say, a name. (see also Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23)

**(1 Corinthians 16:13)** Stay awake, stand firm in the faith, carry on in a manly way, grow mighty.

**(2 Corinthians 13:5)** Keep testing whether you are in the faith; keep proving what you yourselves are. Or do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in union with you? Unless you are disapproved.

**(Galatians 1:23)** They only used to hear: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now declaring the good news about the faith that he formerly devastated."

**(Galatians 6:10)** So, then, as long as we have the opportunity, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.

**(Ephesians 4:5)** one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Here, two meanings of faith are used in one verse:

**(1 Timothy 5:8)** Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith (The Way) and is worse than a person without faith. (belief)

Here Peter refers to it as "*the entire association of your brothers in the world*".

**(1 Peter 5:9)** But take your stand against him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by the entire association of your brothers in the world.

(See also Ac 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; 2Co 13:5; Ga 3:23, 25; Php 1:25; Col 1:23, 2:7; 1Ti 1:2; 3:9; 4:1; 6:10, 12, 21; 2Ti 3:8; 4:7; Tit 1:13; 3:15)

## All Three

So those are the three meanings of the word "faith". Here are all three meanings in one sentence:

His acts of faith, prove his faith, in the faith.

In other words:

His actions, demonstrate his firm belief, in the teachings of Christ.

When you come across the word faith in the Bible, to know which of the three meanings is being referred to, you have look at the context.

## Hebrews 11:1

Since Hebrews 11:1 is the go-to verse for the definition of "*faith*" in the Bible, let's examine that verse more closely to see what its message is.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Faith is the assured expectation of what is hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.

What does that scripture mean? It has four parts. Let's break it down:

**(Hebrews 11:1a)** Faith is the assured expectation

This first part tells us that faith is assured expectation, that is, complete confidence in a future event. The original Greek (hypostasis) for "*assured expectation*" here refers to a certainty of belief.

Belief of what?

**(Hebrews 11:1b)** of what is hoped for,

The original Greek word for "hoped" (elpizomenōn) means to have a feeling of yearning and desire for what we anticipate, even though we have no evidence of it. If there is evidence or proof, then we would not have hope. We would have knowledge instead.

If you stood in line at a deli to buy a 5 dollar sandwich and you looked in your wallet and saw a 20 dollar bill, you would not hope that you had enough money. You would know you did. You would not say "I have faith that I have enough money" because you have proof that you do. Proof replaces hope and faith with knowledge.

*"Hope that is seen is not hope, for when a man sees a thing, does he hope for it?" (Ro 8:24)*

The definition of faith continues. Faith is...

**(Hebrews 11:1c)** the evident demonstration

An evident (elenchos = proof) demonstration is an explicit act that gives proof of something.

This part of the verse is a continuation of the definition of "*faith*."

*"Faith is... the evident demonstration of"*

Faith is a certainty of belief, shown to be so by acts of faith, that is to say, shown to be so by an evident demonstration of our belief.

What do our acts of faith demonstrate our belief of?

**(Hebrews 11:1d)** of realities that are not seen.

*"Realities that are not seen."* (pragmatōn = things) (ou = not) (blepomenōn = see, perceive, discern)

The Greek word for "seen" refers not only to what can be seen with the human eye, but also to things that can be physically detected in other ways. (perceive, discern)

Wind cannot be seen, but it can be felt on the skin. It can be detected by the movement of leaves on a tree or when a child flies a kite. We don't have faith that wind exists, we know it does. The reality of wind is "seen."

We can't see radio waves, but hearing music on your radio is proof that radio waves exist. I work in the field of CATV and have a meter that reads the RF (radio frequency) on the wires. I can see the radio waves on the screen of the meter. We don't have faith that radio waves exist, we know they do. The reality of radio waves is "seen."

Since the Greek word for "seen" also means to perceive or discern, it therefore applies to anything that can be proven, whether with our eyes or in any other way. Therefore, if there is "proof" of a thing, that means that it is not included in the *"realities that are not seen."* Once there is proof, there is no longer faith, because proof supplants faith with knowledge.

So let's put all four parts of Hebrews 11:1 together:

Faith is complete confidence in what we anticipate,

Faith, through an explicit act, proves our belief in that which cannot be perceived.

### **Bibles**

Here is how the *King James Version* (found at JW.org) translates Hebrews 11:1.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Yes, faith is the evidence. It does not say that we have faith in evidence. True faith, through acts of faith, provides evidence of a belief in things not seen.

Here is how the *American Standard Version* (found at JW.org) translates Hebrews 11:1.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.

"Conviction" is not referring to the things not seen. It is faith that is "a conviction". We have a conviction (elenchos = proof through action) of things not seen.

Here is how *The Emphasized Bible* (found at JW.org) translates Hebrews 11:1.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** But faith is of things hoped for a confidence, Of facts a conviction when they are not seen;

Again, it is our conviction (elenchos = proof through action) of unseen things that shows our faith.

(Many more translations are at the end of this article.)

## Demonstration

Why does the second half of the verse describe faith as an act, or a "*demonstration*"?

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Faith is... the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.

Because without our showing proof that we have faith, our faith is dead, (Ja 2:17) that is to say, lifeless. It does not mean that we do not have a hope, but our actions demonstrate that our hope is more than just hope, but is faith.

Hope is merely an optimistic attitude based on desire. Faith is full confidence or trust in something, even though there is no proof of the thing.

You may have hope that a rickety old walking bridge would support you, and you would be reluctant to walk on it if you merely had hope. But if you had faith, you would step out onto it with confidence.

So faith has two components, our certainty of belief in our heart, and our actions giving clear proof of that belief. It is like a flame, which puts out light and heat. You cannot have a dark flame, or a cold flame. Both light and heat must be present or it isn't a flame.

I think that many did not understand that faith cannot only reside in the heart, which is why Paul gave so many examples of acts of faith following the definition of faith, (He 11:4-31) to explain how faith is accompanied by actions. Faith and acts of faith are two sides of a single coin.

Yes, faith without works is dead. That is to say, without an "*evident demonstration*", or, "*convincing evidence*" that you have faith, it is dead (lifeless). (Ja 2:17) Not obscure works, but works that are evident demonstrations of our faith. We must show convincing evidence that we have faith. (He 11:1; Jude 5) Why? Because "*a man is to be declared righteous by works and not by faith alone.*" (Ja 2:24) James calls a man who has faith, but who has no works, an "*empty man*". (Jas 2:20)

That is what it means to have faith. To take action that proves your belief in what cannot be proven. You provide an "*evident demonstration*" of your belief in what there is no evidential support of. Hebrews chapter 11:4-31 gives many examples of acts of faith, and none of those acts of faith were backed up by proof. If faith was because of proofs, that is what Paul would have provide examples of.

For instance, Paul could have referred to Moses and the burning bush. But Moses did not remove his sandals and hide his face because of faith. He was confronted with proof: a burning bush that did not burn up and the voice of God. No faith was needed. (Ro 8:24)

**(2 Corinthians 5:7)** for we are walking by faith, not by sight.

Yes, walking by faith means that we do not have proof (sight). If our belief was based on proof this verse would say: for we are walking by sight, not by faith.

The anointed were given faith (1Co 12:9; Eph 2:8), but we acquire faith by what we hear from the Bible.

**(Romans 10:17)** So faith follows the thing heard. In turn, what is heard is through the word about Christ.

**(Galatians 3:2)** This one thing I want to ask you: Did you receive the spirit through works of law or because of faith in what you heard?

The "*evident demonstration*", or, "*convincing evidence*" that Hebrews 11:1 speaks of applies to our actions that prove we have faith (2Co 13:5), not to the reason that we have faith. ★★★

If we truly have faith, we also have acts of faith. The acts themselves are part of our faith. Or as Paul says in the third part of his definition of faith: "*faith... is the evident demonstration.*" The belief we hold within our heart is invisible like our spirit, while our acts of faith are the visible component of our faith, like our body.

**(James 2:26)** Indeed, just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James also says that faith without works is not only dead, but is as useless (Jas 2:20) as telling someone who is cold and hungry to be warm and well fed. You could go on a campaign to hand out leaflets to everyone in your city who is cold and hungry that say, "Be warm and well fed", but those are just words, and "*of what benefit is it?*" Do your professed "acts of faith" consist of mere words? (2Th 3:10)

**(James 2:15-16)** If any brothers or sisters are lacking clothing and enough food for the day, <sup>16</sup> yet one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but you do not give them what they need for their body, of what benefit is it? <sup>17</sup> So, too, faith by itself, without works, is dead.

Faith is what you rely on when there is no proof. That's what it means to have faith.

It is similar to the trust test. If you don't close your eyes, stand erect, and intentionally fall backwards, you are not providing an "*evident demonstration*" of your trust in the person behind you to catch you. And who is the person we must '*convince*' that we have faith? Jehovah. And how do we convince Him? Through acts of faith.

An act that shows you believe in what there is proof of is not an act of faith. Everyone believes in what there is proof of. Stepping off the tracks because there is an oncoming train is not an act of faith. You see the train, you hear it, you feel the ground shake. You know the train is coming. You have proof. Faith has nothing to do with your act of getting out of the way.

## Works

Are the works spoken about in Ephesians the same as acts of faith?

**(Ephesians 2:8, 9)** By this undeserved kindness you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing; rather, it is God's gift. <sup>9</sup> No, it is not a result of works, so that no one should have grounds for boasting.

No. Works refer to obedience to the Mosaic Law, which require no faith.

**(Romans 3:20)** Therefore, no one will be declared righteous before him by works of law, for by law comes the accurate knowledge of sin.

**(Galatians 2:16)** recognize that a man is declared righteous, not by works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. So we have put our faith in Christ Jesus, so that we may be declared righteous by faith in Christ and not by works of law, for no one will be declared righteous by works of law.

Acts of faith are not about obedience to the Mosaic Law or to Christian values, but are about faith.

**(Galatians 3:11)** Moreover, it is evident that by law no one is declared righteous with God, because "the righteous one will live by reason of faith."

That is what Christ was talking about at John 12:47-48.

**(John 12:47, 48)** But if anyone hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I came, not to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> Whoever disregards me and does not receive my sayings has one to judge him. The word that I have spoken is what will judge him on the last day.

One hears (accepts/believes) his sayings and is not judged even though he "*does not keep them*", while the other disregards (rejects) his sayings and is judged. What is the difference? Both continue to sin, but one has faith while the other does not.

**(John 3:18)** Whoever exercises faith in him is not to be judged. Whoever does not exercise faith has been judged already, because he has not exercised faith in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

Judgment is based on faith, not sin. (Mt 21:31-32) James presents Rahab as an example: "*In the same manner*", although she was still a prostitute (a sinner), she was declared righteous by her works. (Jas 2:25)

## Exercise Faith

When the scriptures use the phrase "*exercise faith*", is it referring to acts of faith?

**(John 3:18)** Whoever exercises faith in him is not to be judged. Whoever does not exercise faith has been judged already, because he has not exercised faith in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

**(John 6:29)** In answer Jesus said to them: "This is the work of God, that you exercise faith in the one whom he sent."

**(John 12:36)** While you have the light, exercise faith in the light, so that you may become sons of light." Jesus said these things and went off and hid from them.

**(John 14:1)** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Exercise faith in God; exercise faith also in me.

And how do you exercise faith in God and Christ? The next verse tells us.

**(Romans 10:9)** For if you publicly declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved.

In this next scripture Christ tells Jairus to exercise faith that his daughter would be healed.

**(Mark 5:36)** But Jesus overheard their words and said to the presiding officer of the synagogue: "Have no fear, only exercise faith."

Luke words this same interaction between Christ and Jairus differently:

**(Luke 8:50)** On hearing this, Jesus answered him: "Have no fear, only have faith, and she will be saved."

The Greek word translated as "*exercise faith*" (pisteusēs) or "*exercises faith*" (pisteuetai) refers to the act of believing within your heart. It refers to an internal process.

When Christ told Jairus to "*exercise faith*", (Mr 5:36) he was not telling him to go perform some act of faith. No, he was telling him to "*exercise faith*" by 'having faith' in his heart. (Lu 8:50; Ro 10:9)

So exercising faith is internal in our heart, acts of faith are external and seen by others, and works refer to obedience to the Mosaic Law. All three of those things are different.

What about this verse? Does it say that exercising faith means to preach?

**(2 Corinthians 4:13)** Now because we have the same spirit of faith as that of which it is written: "I exercised faith, therefore I spoke"; we too exercise faith and therefore we speak,

At 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul is writing to his fellow anointed ones (2Co 1:1; 5:1-5) who have that "*spirit of faith*" which was given to them when they were anointed. (1Co 12:9; Jude 3) These have the commission to evangelize and they fulfill that assignment because they have both the faith and the acts of faith that Hebrews 11:1 tells us of. Their faith and their evangelizing are tied together, which is why it says that they exercise faith "*therefore*" they speak.



The rest of us who are not "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) and therefore do not have the appointment to evangelize, we are required to make public declaration instead, and our faith is tied to that.

**(Romans 10:9, 10)** For if you publicly declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation.

If you have read my article "The Preaching Work" you know that the term "*public declaration*" does **not** refer to the preaching work. (available here <http://da.getmyip.com/PDF/Ramblings>)

On the other hand, even if you are not one of "*his chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) but you wish to help them with their work of evangelizing, i've no doubt that God would also see that as an expression of faith.

But what about this next verse? Does it say that having a good heart means you will preach?

**(Matthew 12:34)** Offspring of vipers, how can you speak good things when you are wicked? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Is that verse referring to the evangelizing work? No. Look at the previous verses for context.

**(Matthew 12:31-33)** "For this reason I say to you, every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come. <sup>33</sup> "Either you make the tree fine and its fruit fine or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten, for by its fruit the tree is known.

In the three previous verses Christ is talking about blasphemy, speaking words against the Son of man and against the holy spirit. "*By its fruit the tree is known.*" That is to say, by your words you show your heart. "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*"

In other words, what your heart is filled with, is revealed by your words. It is not saying that someone with a good heart is required to evangelize. Our words merely identify if we are wicked or good.

Our actions also, of course, identify if we are wicked or good. As an example, Tabitha abounded in good deeds and gifts of mercy:

**(Acts 9:36-39)** Now there was in Jop'pa a disciple named Tab'i-tha, which means, when translated, "Dor'cas." She abounded in good deeds and gifts of mercy that she was making. <sup>37</sup> But in those days she fell sick and died. So they bathed her and laid her in an upper room. <sup>38</sup> Since Lyd'da was near Jop'pa, when the disciples heard that Peter was in that city, they sent two men to him to urge him: "Please come to us without delay." <sup>39</sup> At that Peter got up and went with them. And when he arrived, they led him up into the upper room; and all the widows presented themselves to him, weeping and showing many garments and robes that Dor'cas had made while she was with them.

Doing good and sharing what you have with those in need pleases Jehovah:

**(Hebrews 13:16)** Moreover, do not forget to do good and to share what you have with others, for God is well-pleased with such sacrifices.

**(Hebrews 10:24)** And let us consider ("be concerned about; pay attention to." ftn.) one another so as to incite to love and fine works,

Exercising faith, that is to say, having faith (Lu 8:50) in your heart, is akin to having love and joy in our heart. Even though exercising faith in our hearts is internal, it can be seen externally. When someone is overjoyed, or has strong love, you can see it in their face and demeanor.

**(1 Peter 1:8)** Though you never saw him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, yet you exercise faith in him and are greatly rejoicing with an indescribable and glorious joy,

When you have true faith in your heart, you also act accordingly. And those actions are a display of your faith.

Now is the faith in our heart different from the faith in the heart of the first century "*chosen ones*"? (Mt 24:31) Sort of. Theirs was given to them (1Co 12:9; Eph 2:8) while ours comes from what we "*hear*", that is to say, from what we read in the Bible.

**(Romans 10:17)** So faith follows the thing heard. In turn, what is heard is through the word about Christ.

**(Galatians 3:2)** This one thing I want to ask you: Did you receive the spirit through works of law or because of faith in what you heard?

And their faith included something that ours doesn't: faith in the promise of a heavenly reward. In Paul's letter to Titus, one of his fellow anointed ones, he refers to that faith specifically:

**(Titus 1:1)** Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the accurate knowledge of the truth that is according to godly devotion

**(Titus 1:4)** to Titus, a genuine child according to the faith we share: May you have undeserved kindness and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

But we and the first century anointed ones share the same faith in God and Christ. So when the Bible speaks of faith as a belief, it is basically the same. The only difference is that our faith is in an earthly future while theirs was for a heavenly one.

### Proof

Hebrews 11:1 is **not** saying that we have *faith* because of proof. It is saying that *our works* are proof that we have faith.

**(Hebrews 11:1)** Faith is... the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.

Our acts of faith are an *"evident demonstration"* of our belief of *"realities that are not seen."* That is to say, our belief in what there is no proof of. Hebrews 11:1 says that *"faith is... the evident demonstration"*. It does not say that we have faith in an *"evident demonstration"*. If there was an evident demonstration (proof) of a reality, then that reality would be seen. But that verse refers to realities that are not seen.

If we don't evidently (clearly) demonstrate our faith in that unseen reality, then our "faith" is not true faith, it is merely hope.

Does Romans 1:20 give an example of proofs?

**(Romans 1:20)** For his invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.

No. Paul (and we) attribute the wonders of creation to God and His qualities, but atheists do not. They would tell you it is proof of evolution. If it truly was proof, then atheists could not deny it.

That verse in Romans is often used to promote the idea that the wonders of creation are proof of God. But as Hebrews 11:3 says, it is because of our faith that *"we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God's word."* So it was because of Paul's faith that he attribute the wonders of creation to God.

**(Hebrews 11:3)** By faith we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God's word, so that what is seen has come into existence from things that are not visible.

Do you understand what that scripture is saying? It says that it is *because* we have faith in God that we perceive (Greek, nooumen = think, understand) that creation came into existence because of Him.

If an atheist asked you to prove to him that God exists, and you pointed at a tree or picked a flower and handed it to him, would he say: "Oh wow! You're right! There really is a God." No, of course not, because it is not proof. We view things in a certain way because of our own perception and belief, which stems from our faith.

We "believe" in God so we attribute creation to Him. Atheists "believe" in evolution so they attribute everything to that. Romans 1:20 does not show us proofs, it shows us Paul's faith.

Am i saying that none of us have what we consider to be "proofs" in our lives? No. I have what i think are proofs. Many times, when speaking to someone about the truth, a particular topic flowed from my lips with such ease and clarity that i knew full well it could not have been me alone. I don't speak that well. (Mr 13:11) And other times, when trying to speak to someone, i could not put two coherent sentences together about a topic that was fresh in my mind and that i knew like the back

of my hand, telling me that the holy spirit was holding me back from sharing that message with this person. (2Co 4:3)

Now a "cleaver" non-believer could provide a convincing reason why that was just my mind on a good day, and on a bad. And if this conversation happened when i was feeling particularly down, it just might make me doubt. I don't see that happening, but just as (i believe) the holy spirit helped me with my message, Satan or one of his demons could help this antagonist to make a very convincing assertion in an attempt to persuade me.

My point is: If our faith is based on perceived proofs, our faith could be in danger of faltering. If the thing, the proof, that we are basing our faith on is somehow compromised, then what will happen to our faith?

That "proof" you may have can add to your faith, but don't let it be the cornerstone of your faith. Our faith should be based on the Bible. (Ro 10:17)

### Current Teaching

Current JW teaching is that the second half of Hebrews 11:1 is describing an evident demonstration, that is to say, proof, of the realities that are not seen. The Greek word (elenchos) translated as "*evident demonstration*" in the NWT is not used anywhere else in the Bible, so we can't compare its usage to other scriptures to get a better understanding of it. Here is how that Greek word is defined in various reference guides:

Strong's Concordance = a proof, test.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance = proof, conviction -- evidence, reproof.

HELPS Word-studies = inner conviction.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance = a proof, test.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon = a proof, conviction.

As you can see, elenchos has the meaning of both proof and conviction. (Just to be clear, conviction refers to a certainty of belief or opinion.)

Of the many Bible translations of this verse, which i found and provided at the end of this article, some refer to **proof** and others refer to **conviction**. But which word correctly applies to the Greek word elenchos? **Both of them!**

This part of Hebrews 11:1 is telling us that faith is proof of conviction. And how do we prove our conviction? With an "*evident demonstration*" of it, that is to say, through acts of faith. And what do our acts of faith, our proof of conviction, demonstrate our belief of?

**(Hebrews 11:1d)** of realities that are not seen.

So what are the realities that are not seen that this verse is referring to which requires faith to believe in? Verse 3 tells us:

**(Hebrews 11:3)** By faith we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God's word, so that what is seen has come into existence from things that are not visible.

Do you see how Paul explains himself in that verse? The "*systems of things*", that is to say, all of creation regarding earth and mankind, "*were put in order by God's word*", that is to say, were created at the command of God. (Ge 1:3)

The physical realm was put in place by the spirit realm.

What we can see was created by what we cannot see.

The realities that are seen were created by the realities that are not seen. (He 11:1)

And how do we know that those realities that are not seen exist? We don't. We can't "know" it, because there is no proof, which is why we rely on faith. Paul does not say 'By proof we know', but he says "*By faith we perceive...*".

**(Hebrews 11:3)** By faith we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God's word, so that what is seen has come into existence from things that are not visible.

That is why Paul defines faith in verse 1 as:

*"the assured expectation of what is hoped for,  
the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen."*

In other words, faith is...

our strong belief, our assured expectation, of what we hope for,  
our proof of conviction, our evident acts of faith, of our belief in the spirit realm.

Yes, verse 3 is telling us that it is because we have faith in God that we perceive (Greek, nooumen = think, understand) that creation came into existence because of Him. We believe in God so we attribute creation to Him.

**(Romans 1:20)** For his invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.

No, the wonders of creation are not proof of God. As Hebrews 11:3 says, it is because of our faith that "*we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God's word.*" It was Paul's faith-influenced perception that caused him to attribute the wonders of creation to God.

### **Witness Borne**

But what about verse 2?

**(Hebrews 11:2)** For by means of it, the men of ancient times had witness borne to them.

Doesn't the phrase "*witness borne*" indicate that proof was given to them?

No. Having "*witness borne to them*" sounds like they witnessed something, that something was shown to them, but that is not what the verse means. The original Greek word (emartyrēthēsan) translated as "*witness borne to them*" means to bear witness, to testify. It was the faith of the men of ancient times that bore witness about those men. Their own faith bore witness about them. Other Bible translations say: were commended for, earned a good reputation, received their commendation, obtained a good report, gained approval, won God's approval, and other similar wording.

**(Hebrews 11:4)** By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than that of Cain, and through that faith he received the witness that he was righteous, for God approved his gifts, and although he died, he still speaks through his faith.

The phrase "*received the witness*" also sounds like Abel witnessed something, or that something was shown to him, as it does in verse 2. But the Greek word (emartyrēthē) used here is the root word of the Greek word used in verse 2 and also means to bear witness, to testify. So, again, it was Abel's own faith that bore witness about him. Other Bible translations say: was commended as righteous, was approved as righteous, was declared to be righteous, won God's approval as a righteous man.

So Abel did not see anything, and was not shown anything, but it was his act of faith that showed him to be righteous.

**(Hebrews 11:5)** By faith Enoch was transferred so as not to see death, and he was nowhere to be found because God had transferred him; for before he was transferred he received the witness that he had pleased God well.

It is the same for Enoch's example of faith. We are not told what his act or acts of faith were, but they also proved him to be righteous. Nothing was shown to him. No proof is said to have caused his faith.

But what about Genesis 5:24? Doesn't that say that Enoch walked with God?

**(Genesis 5:24)** Enoch kept walking with the true God. Then he was no more, for God took him.

Wouldn't walking with God and having two-way conversations with Him have been proof of His existence? Yes, if that had happened, that would definitely have been proof of God. But is that what happened? No. If Enoch had proof of God, he would have had knowledge, not faith.

As the following verses show, walking with God does not mean strolling along and having a two-way conversation with Him.

**(Deuteronomy 8:6)** “Now you must keep the commandments of Jehovah your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

**(Deuteronomy 13:4)** After Jehovah your God you should walk, him you should fear, his commandments you should keep, to his voice you should listen; he is the one you should serve, and to him you should hold fast.

And look at what verse 6 says:

**(Hebrews 11:6)** Moreover, without faith it is impossible to please God well, for whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.

That verse tells us that we must believe that God exists. And since it is paired with Enoch's example of faith, Enoch must have had strong faith (not proof) that God existed.

Noah's example of faith is a bit different. His faith was not in the existence of God, for he had proof of that when he received the divine warning. His example is of faith in the word of God.

**(Hebrews 11:7)** By faith Noah, after receiving divine warning of things not yet seen, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; and through this faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness that results from faith.

We may have complete faith in God's existence, but if we have doubt in what He says will happen, that is to say, in Bible prophecy, our faith is weak. Noah's act of faith (building the ark) showed his faith that what God told him would happen, would indeed happen.

This first example of Abraham's faith also did not involve his belief in the existence of God, but was also about his trust in God's promises.

**(Hebrews 11:8-10)** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, although not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he lived as a foreigner in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the very same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was awaiting the city having real foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Through his acts of faith, by following God's directions to go and live as a foreigner, he showed his faith that what God told him would happen, would indeed happen.

Next is Sarah's example of faith:

**(Hebrews 11:11, 12)** By faith also Sarah received power to conceive offspring, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who made the promise. <sup>12</sup> For this reason, from one man who was as good as dead, there were born children, as many as the stars of heaven in number and as innumerable as the sands by the seaside.

But didn't Sarah show lack of faith when she laughed at the idea of becoming pregnant at the age of 90 years old? (Ge 18:9-15) Yes, but it was before her skepticism and laughter that Jehovah had decided to give her a son. (Ge 17:15) Therefore it was her faith prior to this that warranted it. At Genesis 16:15 she shows that she had faith and trusted in Jehovah.

The next example of an act of faith was performed under test.

**(Hebrews 11:17-19)** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac—the man who had gladly received the promises attempted to offer up his only-begotten son—<sup>18</sup> although it had been said to him: “What will be called your offspring will be through Isaac.”<sup>19</sup> But he reasoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, and he did receive him from there in an illustrative way.

Abraham knew that God existed. He did not need faith in that regard. But God did not tell Abraham what would happen once he had offered up his son. Nor did he question God about it. He merely obeyed, having faith that God's promises would still be fulfilled even though he had no proof of it.

Paul continues on giving other examples of those who through acts of faith proved that they truly believed. (He 11:20-38)

**(Hebrews 11:39, 40)** And yet all of these, although they received a favorable witness because of their faith, did not obtain the fulfillment of the promise,<sup>40</sup> because God had foreseen something better for us, so that they might not be made perfect apart from us.

As you can see, the examples Paul gives are examples of the faith that those righteous ones had. Yes, their faith is what was proven, by their actions. These are not examples of proof of what they had faith in. There was no proof of what they had faith in. That was the whole point. That is what Paul was referring to in the second half of Hebrews 11:1, and that is why he provided these examples. So that we would understand what he meant in verse 1.

### The Power of Faith

**(Luke 8:50)** On hearing this, Jesus answered him: “Have no **fear**, only **have faith**, and she will be saved.”

Why did Christ add “*and she will be saved*”? It sort of sounds as if Christ was telling Jairus that his daughter would only get well if he truly believed that she would. What does Jairus' faith have to do with Christ's ability to heal his daughter? If Jairus had no faith, would Christ be unable to heal his daughter?

Are there times where Christ healed someone who had no faith? Did Malchus have faith when Christ healed his ear? The fact that he and the others with him “*drew back and fell to the ground*” when Christ said “*I am he*” shows that he indeed had at least some faith. (Lu 22:50-51; Jn 18:6) Why else would they have fallen to the ground if they did not strongly suspect that he truly was the



Son of God? Falling to the ground was a visible sign of what they believed, that is to say, was an act of faith. (He 11:1)

What about when Christ resuscitated those who had died? True, they could not be said to have faith, but their loved ones no doubt had at least some faith (hope). (Mr 9:24)

So does Luke 8:50 show that Jairus' faith was required for his daughter to be healed? Perhaps. Or maybe Mark left that part out (Mr 5:36) because Christ was merely comforting a man who was in "fear" for his beloved daughter and was just telling him not to worry, that he would save her.

What about these scriptures? Do they say that lack of faith made them unable to be healed?

**(Matthew 13:58)** And he did not perform many powerful works there on account of their lack of faith.

**(Mark 6:5, 6)** So he was not able to do any powerful work there except to lay his hands on a few sick people and cure them. <sup>6</sup> Indeed, he was amazed at their lack of faith. And he went around in a circuit to the villages, teaching.

Christ does not say that he chose not to heal them, but he said that he was unable to heal them because of their lack of faith. If Christ made the choice not to heal any in Nazareth, then he went against that decision when he cured a few of the sick ones there. So does this mean that he laid his hands on sick ones there in an attempt to heal them, but because they lacked faith, his attempt to heal them failed? No. No doubt the majority just didn't come to Christ to be healed because they didn't believe that he could heal them. (Lu 4:40; Ac 5:16) So he was only able to heal the few that showed up.

I can find no scripture where a healed person is said to have no faith at all.

What about the scriptures that tie the faith that someone has to what occurs?

**(Matthew 9:29)** Then he touched their eyes, saying: "According to your faith let it happen to you."

**(Matthew 15:28)** Then Jesus replied to her: "O woman, great is your faith; let it happen to you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour on.

Those scriptures do not say that it was the power of their own faith that made them well. If so, they wouldn't have needed Christ.

**(Mark 5:34)** He said to her: "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed from your grievous sickness."

The same goes for that verse. If her own faith was what healed her, she would not have needed Christ. No, but it was her faith that prompted her to come and touch his garment in order to be healed which resulted in her being made well.

**(Mark 5:28)** for she kept saying: "If I touch just his outer garments, I will get well."

Note that she didn't say: 'I might get well'. No, but she said "I will get well." And it was because of that act of faith (touching his garment) that she was healed. Power went out of him. The power was not from her. (Mr 5:30)

So does that mean that faith has no power? What about these verses?

**(Matthew 17:20)** He said to them: "Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard grain, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

**(Matthew 21:21)** In answer Jesus said to them: "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what I did to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen."

**(Mark 11:23)** Truly I say to you that whoever tells this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but has faith that what he says is going to happen, he will have it happen.

**(Luke 17:6)** Then the Lord said: "If you had faith the size of a mustard grain, you would say to this black mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea!' and it would obey you."

Does the Bible tell us about anyone doing those things? No. Why not? If having complete faith in your ability to do something meant that you could do it, then there would be accounts throughout history of people in the world who did such miraculous things. It didn't even have to be strong faith, just "*faith the size of a mustard grain*." But there are no such accounts. Why? Was Christ not telling the truth about the power of faith?

I think this is another case of where Christ is referring to the future. To explain what I think he meant let's consider Genesis 1:26.

**(Genesis 1:26)** Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and the domestic animals and all the earth and every creeping animal that is moving on the earth."

What does it mean to have all of the animals on the earth in subjection? When someone is in subjection to another, they do what the other tells them to do. They are obedient and submissive. So having the animals in subjection meant that they did what they were told to do. They were obedient and submissive.

How did things change after mankind lost perfection?

**(Genesis 9:2, 3)** A fear of you and a terror of you will continue upon every living creature of the earth and upon every flying creature of the heavens, upon everything that moves on the ground and upon all the fish of the sea. They are now given into your hand. <sup>3</sup> Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for you. Just as I gave you the green vegetation, I give them all to you.

In the garden the animals were in subjection to Adam and Eve. I think that when Adam and Eve lost perfection, they also lost the obedience of the animals. Then, after the flood, that lack of obedience by the animals continued as it was since the first couple had been kicked out of the garden.

Genesis 1:26 goes even further and tells us that perfect man was also to have "the earth and every creeping animal that is moving on the earth" in subjection. Does that mean that the very earth itself was somehow obedient to perfect man? Well, that's what it says, so I think so.

Consider these scriptures:

**(Matthew 21:21)** In answer Jesus said to them: "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what I did to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen.

**(Matthew 8:26, 27)** But he said to them: "Why are you so afraid, you with little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and a great calm set in. <sup>27</sup> So the men were amazed and said: "What sort of person is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him."

**(Mark 4:39)** With that he got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "Hush! Be quiet!" And the wind abated, and a great calm set in. (Mr 6:51)

Trees, the wind, and the sea are all part of the earth itself, and Jesus, a perfect man to replace Adam, showed that he held over them the dominance that Adam and Eve had lost, and so they obeyed him, including "*the wild beasts.*" (Mr 1:13)

Consider also this:

**(Matthew 14:25-31)** But in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.<sup>26</sup> When they caught sight of him walking on the sea, the disciples were troubled, saying: "It is an apparition!" And they cried out in their fear. <sup>27</sup> But at once Jesus spoke to them, saying: "Take courage! It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>28</sup> Peter answered him: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you over the waters." <sup>29</sup> He said: "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat and walked over the waters and went toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But looking at the windstorm, he became afraid. And when he started to sink, he cried out: "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup> Immediately stretching out his hand, Jesus caught hold of him and said to him: "You with little faith, why did you give way to doubt?" (see also Mr 6:48; Jn 6:19)

Was Jesus' walking on the sea a miracle, or just his dominance over it? When Peter asked to also walk on the sea Jesus told him to "*Come!*". But then Peter began to doubt and started to sink.

If this were a miracle being performed by Jesus, Peter would not have started to sink because Jesus' ability would not have faltered. No, but it was Peter's faith that gave way, showing that it was his faith in his ability to walk on water that waned. I think that Peter was walking on water because Jesus gave him permission to exercise the authority over the sea that only a perfect man would have.

Since there are no records of Peter or any of the other apostles walking on water at any later date, i think it was only temporary permission that Jesus gave to or shared with Peter.

Do you ask, why would man need the ability to walk on water? Well the Garden of Eden was watered by a single river flowing through it. (Ge 2:10) Now a single watercourse flowing through an area only waters the land immediately adjacent to the water's edge. I think that the garden was like a river delta, where it fans out and waters a large area, like the Volga River as it flows into the Caspian Sea. The ability to walk on water would be *very* beneficial in traversing such a landscape.

So what does all this have to do with faith giving us the power to lift mountains and trees and throw them into the sea? I think that ability will come in the future when mankind is returned to perfection after Armageddon and our dominance over the animals and the earth is restored.

So since there are no records of any of the apostles ever exercising dominance over the animals or the earth itself, i think this is Christ talking about what future perfect mankind will be able to do. Christ often spoke of future events as though they were current. Here are some examples:

**(Luke 13:5)** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all be destroyed, as they were.

Were the men of that time destroyed if they didn't repent? No. He was talking about at Armageddon. Those men lived normal lives until they died, whether they repented or not.

**(Luke 10:18)** At that he said to them: "I see Satan already fallen like lightning from heaven.

Was Satan thrown out of heaven yet? No, not yet. That was a future event.

**(Luke 21:18, 19)** But not even a hair of your heads will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will preserve your lives.

In verse 16 he said that "*they will put some of you to death*", so clearly in verses 18 and 19 he is referring to the future.

**(John 10:11)** I am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his life in behalf of the sheep.

The shepherd becomes "*fine*" when he "*surrenders his life in behalf of the sheep.*" (Jn 10:15) Jesus refers to himself as "*the fine shepherd*" in anticipation and confidence of his future actions.

**(John 11:26)** and everyone who is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all. Do you believe this?"

Everyone at that time who exercised faith in him died. But in the future, at Armageddon, that will be a true statement.

**(John 13:31)** When, therefore, he had gone out, Jesus said: "Now the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in connection with him.

Was Jesus glorified at that moment? Not quite yet. But in the very near future he was.

So Christ often spoke of future things as though they already were, like his Father sometimes did.

**(Romans 4:17)** (This is just as it is written: “I have appointed you a father of many nations.”) This was in the sight of God, in whom he had faith, who makes the dead alive and calls the things that are not as though they are.

**(Luke 20:38)** He is a God, not of the dead, but of the living, for they are all living to him.”

**[it-2 pp. 18-19]** Because his purposes are absolutely certain of fulfillment, Jehovah “calls the things that are not as though they were” (as in naming Abram “Abraham,” meaning “Father of a Crowd (Multitude)” while he and Sarah were yet childless). (Ro 4:17)

So the apostles, at that time, could not walk on water or tell a mountain to be thrown into the sea. The powers they did have were not from their faith, but were from the holy spirit.

**(Matthew 10:7, 8)** As you go, preach, saying: ‘The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.’<sup>8</sup> Cure the sick, raise up the dead, make lepers clean, expel demons. You received free, give free.

Though their self confidence (faith) did play a role in their ability to perform even those tasks:

**(Matthew 17:19, 20)** Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said: “Why could we not expel it?”<sup>20</sup> He said to them: “Because of your little faith.—(Mt 14:31)

So if perfect Adam held dominance over the animals and the earth, as perfect Jesus did (Mr 1:13), then i think that tells us how things will be when mankind is returned to perfection in the new system of things. The animals will be in subjection, a mountain or a tree could be thrown into the sea at our command, and we will be able to walk on water. All examples of the subjection described at Genesis 1:26. That will be the power of our faith, once perfection is restored to the earth.

But what about now? Does our faith give us any power at all? Yes it does, but in a different way.

**(Ephesians 6:16)** Besides all of this, take up the large shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the wicked one’s burning arrows.

Our strong faith helps us deal with the difficulties put upon us in this system of things ruled over by Satan. (Ro 4:20)

What do you think?

:^)

Dave

da.getmyip@gmail.com

<http://da.getmyip.com/PDF/Ramblings>

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## **Examples of Hebrews 11:1 in many other Bibles:**

### **Modern Translations**

New International Version - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

New Living Translation - Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

English Standard Version - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Berean Study Bible - Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see.

New American Standard Bible - Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen.

NASB 1995 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

NASB 1977 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Amplified Bible - Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].

Christian Standard Bible - Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Contemporary English Version - Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.

Good News Translation - To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.

GOD'S WORD® Translation - Faith assures us of things we expect and convinces us of the existence of things we cannot see.

International Standard Version - Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.

NET Bible - Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.

## **Classic Translations**

King James Bible - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

New King James Version - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

King James 2000 Bible - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

New Heart English Bible - Now faith is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see.

World English Bible - Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen.

American King James Version - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

American Standard Version - Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.

A Faithful Version - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.

Darby Bible Translation - Now faith is [the] substantiating of things hoped for, [the] conviction of things not seen.

English Revised Version - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.

Webster's Bible Translation - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

## **Early Modern**

Geneva Bible of 1587 - Nowe faith is the ground of things, which are hoped for, and the euidence of things which are not seene.

Bishops' Bible of 1568 - Fayth is the grounde of thynges hoped for, the euidence of thynges not seene.

Coverdale Bible of 1535 - Faith is a sure confidence of thinges which are hoped for, and a certaynte of thinges which are not sene.

Tyndale Bible of 1526 - Fayth is a sure confidence of thynges which are hoped for and a certayntie of thynges which are not sene.

### **Literal Translations**

Literal Standard Version - Now faith is [the] substance of things hoped for, [the] proof of matters not being seen,

Berean Literal Bible - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not being seen.

Young's Literal Translation - And faith is of things hoped for a confidence, of matters not seen a conviction,

Smith's Literal Translation - And faith is the foundation of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen.

Literal Emphasis Translation - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the compelled persuasion of things not being seen.

### **Catholic Translations**

Douay-Rheims Bible - Now faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.

Catholic Public Domain Version - Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not apparent.

### **Translations from Aramaic**

Aramaic Bible in Plain English - Now faith is the conviction concerning those things that are in hope, as if it were these things in action, and the revelation of those things that are unseen;

Lamsa Bible - NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, just as it was the substance of things which have come to pass; and it is the evidence of things not seen,

### **New Testament Translations**

Anderson New Testament - Now, faith is a sure confidence with respect to things hoped for, a firm persuasion with respect to things not seen:

Godbey New Testament - But faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Haweis New Testament - NOW faith is the realizing confidence of the things hoped for, and the demonstration of things unseen:



Mace New Testament - Now faith is the foundation of our hopes of happiness, and the persuasion we have about things not evident to our senses.

Weymouth New Testament - Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.

Worrell New Testament - Now faith is an assurance of things hoped for, a sure persuasion of things not seen;

Worsley New Testament - Now faith is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and a conviction of things not seen: