

## “Defining Faith (Part 2)” – Hebrews 11:1

Brandon Holiski  
Southern Oaks Baptist Church  
June 2, 2019

*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com)]*

Take a Bible and meet me in Hebrews 11...

Today we are continuing in our series on the character of biblical faith according to Hebrews 11, the so-called “faith chapter” in the Bible. Before we get into the stories of faith that it mentions (which we will start next week), I decided to take a few weeks considering what the chapter and its context teach us about the nature of saving faith. So far we have considered two lessons...

### Saving Faith Lasts

### Saving Faith Testifies

I would like to add a third and fourth lesson to these today. We have some ground to cover. We are only looking at one verse today, but it is by far the hardest verse in the chapter and one of the most challenging in the book. I’ll do my best to not be too academic, but there will be points where each of us will feel some mental exertion. There’s really no way around it. Understanding the Bible can take work. This verse certainly does. So look at verse 1 of chapter 11 with me. It reads,

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

Seems simple enough, doesn’t it. You wish!

The next characteristic of saving faith I want us to see from this verse is this...

### Saving Faith Hopes

Hardly anything is clear in verse 1 except that faith relates to hope. Everything else in the verse is difficult to nail down because two of the key words are quite rare and quite flexible. Just look at modern English translations and you’ll see what I mean...

“Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen.” (ESV; NASB)

“Now faith is the **reality** of what is hoped for, the **proof** of what is not seen.” (CSB; HCSB)

“Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.” (KJV)

“Now faith is **being sure** of what we hope for, **being convinced** of what we do not see.” (NET)

“Now faith is **confidence** in what we hope for and **assurance** about what we do not see.” (NIV)

“Faith shows the **reality** of what we hope for; it is the **evidence** of things we cannot see.” (NLT)

This sampling of English translations shows us that language experts really struggle with how to translate the two key, Greek words. When you compare the translations you may even get the impression that the words mean the same thing. They do not generally. But in some instances the same English word is used to render each Greek word (e.g., “Assurance,” cf. ESV, NIV).

We’ll come back to those words momentarily, but for now let’s recognize that, whatever else this verse may be saying about faith, it’s at least saying that faith has something to do with hope. Faith hopes. I like the way Richard Phillips explains it:

“Verse 1 describes the environment in which faith exists and works. Faith takes place when things are hoped for but not yet possessed or manifested. In this respect, faith deals with the future. Paul spoke of the expectancy of faith in Romans 8: ‘Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience’ (Rom. 8:24-25). Faith concerns unseen spiritual realities, things as they are in God’s sight. Faith, therefore, related to things we do not yet have, to the things we hope for and do not see, to things that are promised by God but are so far unfulfilled in our actual experience.”<sup>1</sup>

In short—faith hopes. It looks forward with hope. It’s more than that, but certainly not less. But when I say that “faith hopes,” I don’t want you to misunderstand what I mean. Let’s start with what “faith hopes” doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean what many people mean when faced with some grim future prospect. For many, “I have faith” simple means “I am sure hoping this works out for me.” It’s wishful thinking. And it’s really subjective. But what the author has in mind is far more objective and concrete than that sort of thing.<sup>2</sup> And this leads us to the first key word.

The word is *hypostasis*. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word occurs twenty times to translate twelve different Hebrew words. That gives you some idea of the semantic range of the word. It’s capable of more shades of meaning than most. In the book of Hebrews the word occurs three times and in three of the most contested verses (1:3; 3:14; 11:1). Depending on the scholar or translation you are reading, it is not uncommon for the word to be translated with a different flavor in each of these sightings, making it one of the most inconsistently translated words in the book. An exhaustive study of the word and a history of its translation vastly exceed the scope of a sermon.<sup>3</sup> Dissertations have been written on much less. But a brief overview is warranted.

In the translations of verse 1 that we considered earlier, you’ll notice that they were split between interpreting the word as describing “the subjective experience of faith” (e.g., “assurance”) and “the objective realities of faith” (e.g., “reality” or “substance”).<sup>4</sup> I’m of the opinion of many scholars that reading the word as a subjective experience,<sup>5</sup> though it could fit the context, is not well substantiated in Greek literature where it hardly ever (if ever) bears such meaning.<sup>6</sup> So needless to say, I don’t love the ESV translation here (or the NIV, et. al.). I like the translation “reality” or “substance” better because I think it is better supported in the Greek literature and because it can fit the context of the three instances of the word in Hebrews.<sup>7</sup>

So in Hebrews 1:3 we read that Jesus is “*the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...*” The word “*nature*” is the word *hypostasis*. What is the author saying about the Son of God there? He’s not saying that the Son is like God or merely *appears* to be God. He’s saying that the Son *is* God because He possesses the same divine “*nature*” or “*substance*.”<sup>8</sup> And, by the way, for you theology buffs out there, the “hypostatic union” relates to the conversation about the relationship between the divine and human natures in the single person of Christ. “Hypostatic” comes from this Greek word, *hypostasis*.

Then in Hebrews 3:14, the ESV reads, “*we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*” The word translated “*confidence*” is the Greek word in question. Once again, I don’t like that reading. I think the author has faith in view, but he chooses to describe it as the “substance” we

had at first. As one commentator put it, “the beginning of the *substantial reality* in which our faith rests.”<sup>9</sup> That’s the idea, though it makes for a confusing translation.

Now, in chapter 11, the author says, “Faith is the *hypostasis* of things hoped for...” and I think, yet again, as in the previous two instances, the author has in mind “substance/reality.” The KJV gets it right: “*faith is the substance of things hoped for...*” More recently, the NLT, HCSB, CSB, also capture the sense when they say something to the effect of “*faith is the reality of what is hoped for...*” Substance. Reality. That’s the idea. But what does that even mean? Well, I like the explanation offered by Philip Hughes four decades ago, “faith lays hold of what is promised and therefore hoped for, as something real and solid, though yet unseen.”<sup>10</sup> And in this sense, it is “by faith” that “we possess things that are hoped for [now]; faith is the manner in which we hold them, and by faith they are real in our experience.”<sup>11</sup> John Calvin was very eloquent on this point. He wrote:

“The Spirit of God shows us hidden things, the knowledge of which cannot reach our senses... We are told of the resurrection of the blessed, but meantime we are involved in corruption; we are declared to be just, and sin dwells within us; we hear that we are blessed, but meantime we are overwhelmed by untold miseries; we are promised an abundance of good things, but we are often hungry and thirsty; God proclaims that He will come to us immediately, but seems to be deaf to our cries. What would happen to us if we did not rely on our hope, and if our minds did not emerge above the world out of the midst of darkness through the shining Word of God and by His Spirit? Faith is therefore rightly called the substance of things which are still the objects of hope and the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>12</sup>

All of those things that he describes—resurrection, full and final freedom from sin, the return of Christ, and so on—are part of the Christian hope.<sup>13</sup> The writer of Hebrews calls it “*the promised eternal inheritance.*”<sup>14</sup> It’s our heavenly hope. And the author calls it to mind on many occasions, but let me show you just three representative instances. As we read them, you’ll notice the author’s tendency to link promised hope with perseverance, which, as we’ve seen, is the demonstration of faith.<sup>15</sup>

“*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive **the promised eternal inheritance**, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*” (Hebrews 9:15)

“*Let us hold fast the confession of **our hope** without wavering, for he who **promised** is faithful.*” (Hebrews 10:23)

“*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is **promised.***” (Hebrews 10:36)

And then, of course, there is the verse in question—“faith is the substance/reality of things hoped for...” So what are we to make of all of this? What is the author trying to impress upon us. Perhaps it is something like this:

“A faith that hopes will look forward to this promised eternal inheritance with complete confidence that God will keep his promise. A faith that hopes will live life differently here, because of the treasure of heaven. [And] A forward looking hope is necessary for perseverance.”<sup>16</sup>

Through faith we gain a foretaste of our hope and this allows us to persevere until that hope is fully inherited. Why does that matter? We’ve been in the interpretive weeds, so how does this help us on the block? Well let me give you an example. Recently I heard a pastor talk about his encounter with a guy named Dan at an adoption conference. In the course of their conversation the pastor learned that Dan and his wife had been saving for years so that they could go on a dream vacation in Ireland for their 15<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They had planned it out. All the best castles were plotted on their map. The time couldn’t get there fast enough. And they were within a year of that trip. Then they got a call.

You see, there was a child who needed a family to adopt him. Dan and his wife were hoping to adopt and had taken steps in that direction, but they didn't expect an opportunity to come anytime soon. When Dan answered the phone, the caller said: "There is a boy who is up for adoption. Pray about it and talk to your wife, but I need to know in the next 5 minutes. If you decide to move forward with the adoption you'll have the boy tomorrow." Can you imagine?

Dan and his wife huddled up to pray and discuss the possibility. They realized immediately that, because this came out of nowhere, they did not have the money saved up for an adoption. So what did they do? They opted to use the money that they had been saving for years for Ireland to pay the adoption expenses. They had a new son. But there went their dream vacation. Yet Dan explained to the pastor that he and his wife didn't forfeit their dream to see Ireland, just the money. "They reasoned, in that moment, that they would still see Ireland one day, but not in this life", explained the reminiscing pastor.

"They believe that they will see Ireland in the new heaven and the new earth. And they believe that the Ireland they will see will be a new and better Ireland; an Ireland that is not still groaning as Romans 8:22 says, but an Ireland that is free from bondage and decay; an Ireland that will share in the glory of everything that Christ has redeemed. They will see this Ireland when they enter their promised eternal inheritance."<sup>17</sup>

Do you see the power of a faith that is the substance of things hoped for? It's the kind of faith that can lose much in this life because there is something better in store in the next. The kind of faith that doesn't allow that which is visible to blind us to the invisible hope we have in Christ. It's the kind of faith that embraces the truth of Romans 8:18—"*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*"—and therefore looks at this life and the things of this life differently and is freed to risk much for Christ and His glory. It's the kind of faith that the writer of Hebrews had seen in his readers, who he describes as having "*endured a hard struggle with suffering, sometimes being publically exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated...and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one*" (Hebrews 10:32-34).

And now, having laid this preliminary groundwork, the author is about to illustrate that this faith is our heritage. He shows this by reminding us in the rest of the chapter of several of our spiritual forebears. "*By faith*" is the repeated refrain. Eighteen times he uses the phrase. He sounds the note first in verse 3, where he speaks of creation. Then again in verse 4 when he speaks of a man murdered by the name of Abel. Then again and again throughout this chapter as he works chronologically through biblical history.

Then, at the start of chapter 12, we too are invited to walk "*by faith*" as they have. But notice what that looks like and "looks to" according to 12:2—"*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...*" If we are going to walk "by faith" as they have, then we must look to Jesus, the one in whom all our hopes are realized. It's as if the writer is suggesting that "all of the people listed in the hall of faith from creation onward were looking forward to Jesus by faith (whether consciously or not)."<sup>18</sup> When we look backward to them, we are seeing people who look forward to the objective hope we have in Christ. And, in that sense, this "*great...cloud of witnesses*" testifies in one voice—"Look to Jesus!"

Clearly, the author shares our conviction that the Bible should be read Christologically. As Al Mohler explains,

"God embedded in the history of redemption types and shadows that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Thus, from Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells one story—the story of the grace of God found only in Jesus Christ."<sup>19</sup>

And listen to these words from Matt Smethurst,

“If we ever hope to properly handle the stories *in* the Bible, we must first grasp the story *of* the Bible. And that story, the one that traverses its way from Genesis to Revelation, though recorded *for* you, is not finally *about* you. The focus is higher and the hero far better... The Bible has one ultimate plan, one plot, one ultimate champion, one ultimate King. This is what ‘Christocentrically’ means—centered on Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

Now the writer of Hebrews is reminding us that all these Old Testament figures had hopes that are realized only in Christ too. He is the One who the whole story revolves around. He is the one in whom our hope rightly rests. In Him is our reward. In Him is the hope of our inheritance. All those things that God has promised us—which make up the things we hope for as Christians—are caught up in Christ. We accept them as true because our faith gives substance of that hope,<sup>21</sup> it gives a foretaste. But more than that, faith is a kind of evidence of that future hope that we do not yet see in our present experience. And this leads us to the next characteristic of saving faith...

### **Saving Faith Assures**

How are we to understand the second half of verse 1? The ESV reads, “Faith...is the conviction of things not seen.” Here again we have a debated word. It’s that word “conviction.” If you remember some of the translations I read earlier, we saw that it too is sometimes translated in various ways (e.g., “proof,” “evidence,” “being convinced,” “assurance”). What makes the word so challenging is that it occurs only here in the entire New Testament.

I’m not going to get us back into the technical details of a word study (I hit my sermon quota for that already with *hypostasis*!). Suffice it to say, the term is used outside the New Testament to refer to “a legal argument substantiated by evidence (*elenchos*; Job 13:6; 16:21; 23:7 LXX).”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the evidence supports translating it as “evidence” (or “proof”). See what I did there? If that’s what the word generally means—evidence/proof—then why do many translations not go that direction? Why do some say “conviction” or “assurance”?

I think it’s because if it means “evidence/proof” then it is, at least at first glance, difficult to make sense out of verse 1. You may already be wondering, “How can faith be evidence or proof? Faith needs evidence, doesn’t it?”<sup>23</sup> So there is a logical challenge here that, I believe, inclines some interpreters to look for a less frequent meaning of the word. But all of that discomfort can dissipate, if, as I would argue, faith can be understood as “evidence for things not seen.” So, again, the question is paramount—How is faith evidence of things not seen?

It’s a fair question. John Piper makes an attempt at answering it by reminding us that there are different kinds of evidences for things. To illustrate this he contrasts verse 3 with Romans 1:20. Here’s what Paul says to the Romans:

*“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”*  
(Romans 1:20)

So that verse is teaching us that God’s “invisible attributes”—things not seen—are “clearly perceived” by people as they observe “the things that have been made”—the evidence. In other words, it is by evidence that unseen things are seen. We look at the world that God has made and we can see the fingerprints of the Creator. We see order. We see the beauty and artistry. We see what scientists sometimes refer to as the “irreducible complexity” and we can discern that there must be some design to it all. There must be an intelligent Designer. A Creator. And the evidence can teach us something about this God. Can the evidence be suppressed? Of

course! But Paul says, “we have no excuse” to dismiss the evidence. The unseen God—and His unseen nature and unseen attributes—are seen by such evidence.

Now consider the parallel verse in Hebrews 11. Verse 3 reads,

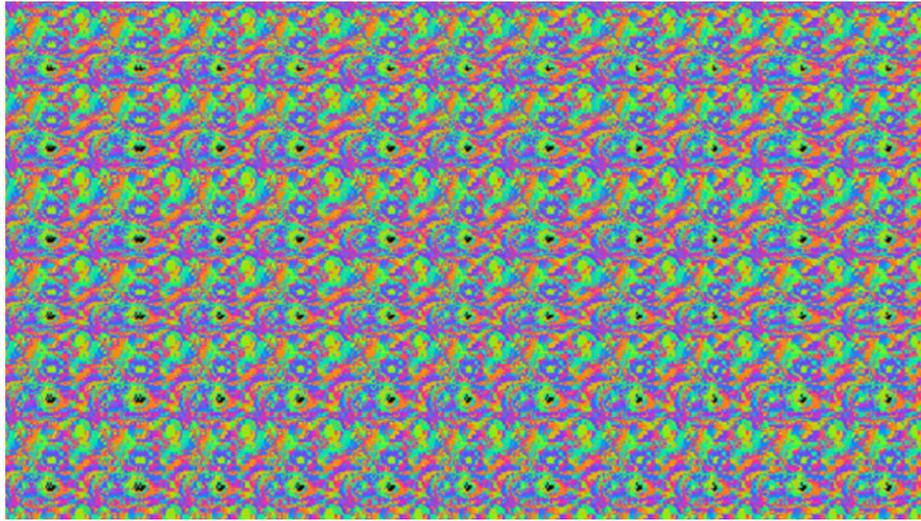
*“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”* (Hebrews 11:3)

So then consider that verse in light of verse 1. If faith is the evidence of things not seen (verse 1), then the author is saying it is “by faith”—or “by evidence”—that we understand that the universe was created by the word of God. And, by the way, that word “*understand*” is the same word translated “*perceive*” in Romans 1:20.

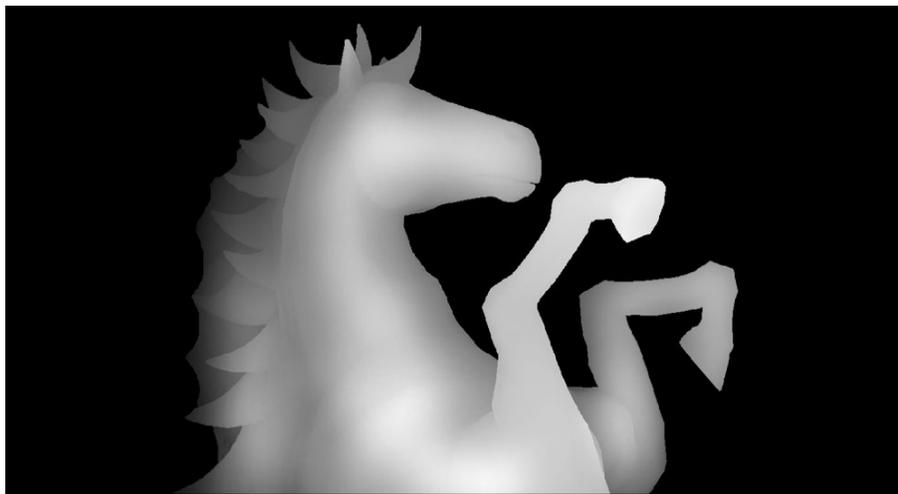
So Romans was saying that the visible evidence of creation points to the invisible God. Hebrews is saying that evidence of faith points to the fact that the visible universe is the product of the invisible God. In the first case, the evidence for God is seen in the fingerprints He has left on what He has made. In the second case, the evidence is in the *seeing* of those fingerprints. For those who see the fingerprints, their seeing (their faith) is a kind of evidence. As the expression goes, “Seeing is believing.” How do I know Tony can swing a sledge hammer? Because I saw him do it at the work day about 24 hours ago. My seeing is the evidence. So, as Piper concludes, “I think that this is the way faith is the evidence of things unseen. We all look at the same fingerprints, but some see and some don’t. Those who see have the evidence—the testimony—in themselves.”<sup>24</sup>

Maybe your head is spinning right about now. I get it. This is a tough verse of Scripture to wrap your minds around. But let me give you an illustration that I think will simplify it. This is the best illustration I can think of at present. When I was a kid, they would distribute those “Scholastic Book Club” catalogs at school from time to time. How many of you got those in school? I think the company was founded in the early 1920s and I know they are still around because our kids have received them. Well I loved those things! Some of you are thinking, “Of course, you did. You’re a book nerd.” True. But I wasn’t back then. I hated reading back then. But occasionally they would have things that looked like toys or books that were more interactive. I remember always wanting to get my hand on those “Goosebumps” books. Remember those? I didn’t want to read them (as I never completed a book for school until college), I just wanted to get my hands on them because I thought the covers were cool because the title “Goosebumps” actually had raised goose bumps on the lettering. What can I say? When you are young and poor it doesn’t take much to excite you.

But my all time favorite book that my mom bought me from the catalogue was one of those *Magic Eye* books. Who knows what I am talking about? When I got that book, that’s the only kind of book I ever wanted again. Basically a *Magic Eye* book was filled with pages that didn’t have words but were covered in psychedelic colors and images like hippie wallpaper or something. It was just a random image that didn’t look like anything. But if you stared at it the right way, all of the sudden, something familiar would jump off the page at you. It’s really hard to explain. So have a look at the screen. On one page you might see this image...



Nothing special, right? But then you would hear classmates yelling, “I see a horse! There’s a horse!” Because what they saw start to come off the page was something like this...



It would be same coloration as the previous image, but all of the sudden some people would be able to see the horse appear in 3D at the center of the page. It was so cool.

I did a little research and discovered that back in 1959 there was a neuroscientist and psychologist named Bela Julesz who was doing some research to test whether or not people could see in 3D.

“Julesz would generate one image of uniform, randomly distributed dots. Then, he’d select a circular area of dots within the image and shift that area slightly in a second image. Someone viewing the two pictures side by side perceive a circle floating above the background, even though the random dots had no depth cues. This supported his idea that depth perception happened in the brain, and not in the eye itself.”<sup>25</sup>

About twenty years later, one of Julesz’s students by the name of Chris Tyler and a computer programmer named Maureen Clarke found out that the same thing could be done with a single image. They learned more about what is happening in the brain and eye when the brain perceives depth. The creators of the *Magic Eye* books took all that research and commercialized that. And, as a child, I was really glad they did!

I remember getting so frustrated by those books at first because many of my friends would say they saw things on the page, but I never did. I would try and try, but nothing. I would squint my eyes until my head would hurt,

but all I saw was random color on a page. Then I had a friend come to me and said, “Look Brandon, this is what you do. Put your nose on the page. Cross your eyes and slowly move the book away from your face and relax your eyes back to their normal position.” So I said, “Pffttt! Whatever. I ain’t doing that,” because I thought he was trying to make a fool of me. But then when I got home, I did it when no one was around. And guess what! There was a horse of that page. It worked.

Then it was like I was part of the club. I could see something that some of my friends could see and some of them, try as they might, never could. Where once I saw just “color and chaos,” now I could see a horse jumping off the page. And it didn’t matter how many of my skeptical friends denied it and told me there was nothing on that page, I knew better. If they asked, “How do you know there’s a horse on the page?” the answer was clear as can be to me—“I see it!” It didn’t matter that they couldn’t see it. I had all the evidence I needed. I could see it. And the seeing was itself a compelling evidence for me.

That, friends, is analogous to faith. By faith we can perceive some unseen realities. We can see the fingerprints of God on His handiwork. They look at God’s creation and see “color and chaos.” Others look at the same stuff and see something deeper. The fingerprints come into view. The truth comes into focus. Two people staring at the same thing, one seeing and the other not seeing. If the one who can’t see asks the one who can see for evidence, what evidence can they offer? They see it. And no one can talk them out of it. Once you’ve seen, you can’t go on pretending there is nothing there. So their seeing is a kind of evidence. And the existence of faith in a person’s life can function in much the same way. It’s not the only evidence (again, cf. Romans 1:20), but it is an evidence nonetheless.

Piper writes,

“You may ask, “Should that be called faith?” Didn’t Paul say (in 2 Corinthians 5:7): ‘We walk by faith and not by sight’? How can faith be ‘sight’? Paul meant that Christ is not present physically on earth to see with physical eyes, but is in heaven. He did not mean that there is no spiritual perception of God’s reality. Hebrews 11:1 says, ‘Faith is the conviction—or better, the evidence—of things not seen.’ And then the writer illustrates this in verse 3 when he says that ‘we understand by faith’ that God created the world. In other words, faith is not just a responding act of the soul; it is also a grasping or perceiving or understanding act. It is a spiritual act that sees the fingerprints of God. This does not mean that you believe them into being. That would be wishful thinking—the power of positive thinking. That is not authentic faith. Real faith is based on real Truth. It looks deeply at the world God has made—looks through it, so to speak—and by the grace of God, it sees the glory of God (as Psalm 19:1 says) standing forth off the creation like a 3-D image.”<sup>26</sup>

Hopefully, this helps us to understand the meaning of Hebrews 11:1 better when it says, in the words of the KJV, “faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.” When we hear the Gospel it can awaken faith in us because as Paul says, “*faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Romans 10:17). We hear that Jesus is the Son of God who came to the world, took on our humanity, offered Himself in our place on the cross to die for our sins, and rose from the dead that all who believe might share in His victory and blessing, we are faced with a decision—trust and believe or turn away and deny. If we believe, then we lay hold of the promised hope. Our faith is a foretaste of the hope. The substance. And as we taste and see in faith, our faith also serves as a kind of reassuring evidence. We believe because God fanned faith into flame in our hearts. The existence of that flame is evidence of God and His work in our life. It’s a kind of assurance. Hence the reason I say that “Saving Faith Assures.”

So we have seen that saving faith lasts, testifies, hopes, and assures. What I want us to see next week is that...

**Saving Faith Justifies**

To see this, we are going to examine the first character mentioned in Hebrews 11, a man by the name of Abel. He has a very interesting story. It teaches us more than we might expect. So I hope you will join us next week as we will plunge deeper into Hebrews 11 and dip into Genesis.

Let's pray...

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard. D. Phillips, *Hebrews* (REC; Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 392.

<sup>2</sup> These observations are also made by Josh Black, "God's Hall of Faith: The Gallery of the Ancients," a sermon accessed online as of June 8, 2019, at the following: <http://firstfreewichita.org/sermons/sermon/2010-03-07/-gods-hall-of-faith-part-1:-the-gallery-of-the-ancients>.

<sup>3</sup> For a good overview of the word see "ὑπόστασις" in Moisés Silva, Revision Editor, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 4:571-574. For a good overview of the history of translation of the word, see James D. Smith III, "Faith as Substance or Surety: Historical Perspectives on *Hypostasis* in Hebrews 11:1," in *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God's Word to the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 381-392.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, "Hebrews" in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESCEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 162.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes this is grounded on the LXX rendering of ὑπόστασις in Ruth 1:12, Psalm 38:8, and Ezekiel 19:5. The influence of Hebrews 3:6 also present (cf. παρρησία). Philipp Melancthon encouraged Martin Luther to translate ὑπόστασις "sure confidence" in 3:14 and 11:1. After much deliberation he decided on "confidence." Their influence has probably helped the popularity of this view, more than the early sources (or lack thereof). Köster, TDNT, vol 8, 586; BDAG, 1041; Others who prefer "confidence" or "assurance" include: Calvin; Bleek; Westcott; Bruce, 68; Hughes; Buchanan; Teodorico; Michel; Koester, AB, 260, 266; Sacra Pagina, 90; Hagner, NIBC, 65; Moffatt, ICC, 48.

<sup>6</sup> The author has different uses different words to convey the subjective notions of "confidence" (e.g., *parēsia* in 10:19, 35) and "full assurance" (*plērophoria*; 10:22). Johnson, 162. Indeed, "the meaning 'confidence' denoting a mental state of assurance or a subjective sense of security, is at best rare; some go as far as to say that 'examples cannot be found' (BDAG s.v., meaning 3)" (NIDNTTE, 4:573). Among those "some" would be Lane (325-326), who writes, "It is imperative that the objective sense of the term be represented in translation... translations like 'confidence' or 'assurance' are untenable because they give to ὑπόστασις a subjective value that it does not possess." For the case for the subjective sense, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (BTC; Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 338-340. Perhaps Koester (*Hebrews*, 472) gets at the relationship between the objective and subjective senses of the word best: "The subjective side emerges when *hypostasis* is linked with 'faith,' which pertains to the believing person. The objective side emerges when *hypostasis* is connected to 'things hoped for,' since the object of hope lies outside the believer." Cited in Schreiner, 340.

<sup>7</sup> Philip E. Hughes gives a good overview of the interpretive options for *hypostasis* in Hebrews 11:1. He identifies and explains four options: (1) nature/substance, (2) foundation, (3) confidence/assurance, and (4) guarantee/attestation. Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 439ff; cf. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Nottingham: Apollos, 2010), 398-399. Some have even opted of a combination of nuances. For examples, Richard Phillips writes, "It seems that the writer of Hebrews deliberately chose a word that has a broad and rich array of meanings, all of which are to the point. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; it is the foundation upon which they are brought into being; it is a confident attitude toward those things God has promised; and it is the guarantee that gives us a sure possession even now." Phillips, 394. While I don't disagree that faith is all of these things in the Bible, but it's not likely that the author of Hebrews intended such a complicated hybrid of ideas in this verse. That said, the ideas are not mutually exclusives and the author may have chosen the word to play on multiple possibilities.

---

<sup>8</sup> “Just as the glory is really in the effulgence, so the substance (Gk. *hypostasis*) of God is really in Christ, who is its impress its exact representation and embodiment. What God essentially is, is made manifest in Christ. To see Christ is to see what the Father is like.” F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, 162.

<sup>10</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 439.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips, 394. Similarly, Peter T. O’Brien (drawing on Lane, 2:329) writes, “Viewed from this perspective, ‘faith’ is something objective that in the here and now gives to things hoped for ‘a substantial reality, which will unfold in God’s appointed time.’”

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 12:157-158.

<sup>13</sup> Lane calls them “the totality of the expected heavenly blessings viewed in their objective certainty.” Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 326.

<sup>14</sup> “They [i.e., the divine promise and future inheritance] are ‘the things hoped for’ and include the world to come (2:5), the sabbath rest (4:1-11), and eternal inheritance (9:15), the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22-24), and an unshakeable kingdom (12:28).” O’Brien, 399.

<sup>15</sup> Josh Black, “God’s Hall of Faith.”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (CCE; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 170. He continues, “Yet, we must remember that reading the Old Testament Christologically does not mean that we are imposing something on the Old Testament that is not already there. In fact, one of the most important hermeneutical observations we can glean from Hebrews 11 is that the true people of God in the Old Testament (those with circumcised hearts) understood that the old covenant and all of its attendant features pointed forward to the Messiah. This is something received *by faith*. In other words, just as by faith we look back to the cross of Christ and his resurrection to receive the salvific grace of God, so too did the Old Testament saints look forward, through the types and shadows of the old covenant, to the Messiah. They thereby received the salvific blessings of God by faith.” Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Smethurst, *Before You Open Your Bible: Nine Heart Postures for Approaching God’s Word* (Leyland: 10Publishing, 2019), 71-72.

<sup>21</sup> David L. Allen, *Hebrews* (NAC; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 543.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, 162.

<sup>23</sup> John Piper, “What Faith Knows and Hopes For,” a sermon accessed online as of June 8, 2019, at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-faith-knows-and-hopes-for>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Matt Soniak, “How Do Magic Eye Pictures Work?”, accessed online as of June 8, 2019, at <http://mentalfloss.com/article/29648/how-do-magic-eye-pictures-work>.

<sup>26</sup> Piper, “What Faith Knows and Hopes For.” The idea for the 3D image illustration was also sparked by an similar illustration in this same sermon.