

Hebrews 11:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Analysis

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This verse introduces Scripture Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11), providing foundational definition of biblical faith. Rather than abstract philosophy, this grounds faith in confidence regarding God promises and unseen realities.

"Faith" means trust, confidence, reliance, firm conviction. Biblical faith is not blind optimism but reasoned trust in God based on His revealed character and promises. "Substance" literally means standing under, foundation, reality, assurance. Faith gives present substance to future promises—making them real and certain now, though not yet experienced.

"Of things hoped for" refers to future realities promised by God: resurrection, eternal life, Christ return, glorification. Biblical hope is not uncertain wishing but confident expectation. Faith gives substance to these hopes—treating them as certain though future.

"Evidence" means proof, conviction, demonstration. Faith provides conviction regarding unseen realities—not empirical proof for skeptics but internal certainty for believers. We are convinced of spiritual realities (God existence, Christ resurrection, heaven, hell) though invisible to physical senses.

"Of things not seen" encompasses all spiritual realities invisible to eyes but revealed by God. The chapter heroes acted on unseen realities: Noah building ark

before flood, Abraham leaving for unseen country, Moses choosing suffering over Egypt visible pleasures.

Historical Context

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians facing persecution and temptation to abandon Christianity. The epistle demonstrates Christ superiority over Old Testament institutions, urging readers to persevere in faith.

Chapter 10 warns against apostasy and encourages endurance. Chapter 11 illustrates faith through Old Testament examples, demonstrating that faith—trusting God unseen promises rather than visible circumstances—has always defined righteous living.

For Jewish Christians, returning to Judaism meant choosing visible temple worship and established rituals over invisible spiritual realities in Christ. Persecution made visible safety tempting; faith required trusting unseen divine promises.

Greek philosophy valued reason and empirical evidence. Hebrews counters that faith provides its own evidence—not through physical senses but through God revealed truth. We are not irrationally believing nonsense but rationally trusting God reliable revelation.

Throughout church history, martyrs demonstrated this faith—dying for unseen realities they valued more than visible life. Modern persecuted believers worldwide demonstrate that unseen spiritual realities matter more than visible earthly safety.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How is biblical faith different from blind faith or wishful thinking?
2. What does it mean that faith gives substance to things hoped for?
3. In what areas are you most tempted to trust visible circumstances rather than invisible spiritual realities?
4. How do Old Testament examples in Hebrews 11 demonstrate faith as trusting God promises over visible evidence?
5. What unseen realities should most shape your daily decisions and priorities?

Interlinear Text

Ἐστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων
is Now faith of things hoped for the substance of things
G2076 G1161 G4102 G1679 G5287 G4229

ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων
the evidence not seen
G1650 G3756 G991

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:7 (Faith): (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

2 Corinthians 4:18 (Parallel theme): While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Hebrews 11:7 (Faith): By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Hebrews 10:22 (Faith): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Psalms 27:13 (Faith): I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Hebrews 11:27 (Faith): By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Hebrews 6:12 (Faith): That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (Faith): And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Psalms 42:11 (Hope): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Hebrews 10:39 (Faith): But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

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