



a word from Pastor Chuck



Faith, Part 2: The Nature of Faith—What Is It?

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

Hebrews 11:1

When my boys were growing up, they wanted beards so badly that they used to check the mirror daily to see if any whiskers had developed overnight. For a long time, it was a thing of faith—*“the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* They couldn’t see any evidence yet, but they trusted that one day they would have beards like the hippies all around them.

Faith is *“the evidence of things not seen.”* It is believing that God will keep His Word—no matter what. Even without any sign yet of God’s work in a given situation, those with faith can rest on the promise of God. To a person of faith, those promises are sufficient.

When the Old Testament prophet Elijah prayed that it would not rain, no water fell from the sky for 3½ years (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). After God promised rain in 1 Kings 18:1, Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel and began to pray for rain (verse 42). Elijah then sent his servant to look out toward the sea. The man returned and reported no signs of rain.

Genuine faith asks and expects God to act simply because He said He would. It perseveres in believing He will, even before His work in a specific situation can be detected. So Elijah prayed again and sent the servant back to look. The man returned and reported that the sky was still cloudless. Elijah continued to pray and send his servant, seven times, until the man came back and said, *“There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!”* (1 Kings 18:44b). Elijah immediately directed the nation’s king to flee—and did so himself. A downpour was coming (verse 45).

Consider the Evidence

When Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,”* it is not so much defining

faith as it is declaring what faith does. Faith acts as though God is going to work, even before He does. Some versions translate the word “evidence” in this verse as “conviction.” We are convicted of certain truths, despite not having seen them yet, so we act on them.

But how do we get faith in the first place? Our belief in the wind gives us an analogy. We can’t see wind, but we believe in it because we have seen its effects. We see mighty trees bowing to its force. We see little

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columns of leaves swirling into the air. We not only see the evidence, we also feel it.

In the same way, I see abundant evidence for the existence of God. I see His work in people’s lives all around me. I feel His presence. I experience His love. I sense His power displayed in the universe. And faith in Him blossoms in my heart, enabling me to trust Him in other areas.

Since I believe in God, I also believe His Word. I accept the promises He has made that He has caused to be written down in the Bible. Some of them I have not yet experienced, but I know I will, because I know God is faithful. And while I wait for God to fulfill His promises, it is faith that sustains me, faith that encourages me, and faith that keeps me going.

The Wonder of Divine Fiat

The writer of Hebrews gives us an interesting perspective on faith: *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God”* (Hebrews 11:3a).

In the very beginning, *“God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light”* (Genesis 1:3).

God soon said, *“Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters”* (Genesis 1:6), and it was so. God said, *“Let the earth bring forth ... the herb that yields seed ... according to its kind”* (Genesis 1:11), and everything happened just as He said. God simply spoke His Word, and the universe was born.

God created everything we see (as well as everything we don’t see) by what we call the divine fiat. That is, God simply spoke it all

into existence. He gave the command, and what had never existed before immediately sprang into being. We believe all of this through faith; faith enables us to *“understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”* The writer then continues: *“...so that the things which are seen [the material universe] were not made of things which are visible”* (Hebrews 11:3b).

At the time this Scripture was written, no one knew anything about electrons, protons, or neutrons, much less about smaller, subatomic particles such as quarks or leptons. Yet by faith, the writer proclaimed that everything we see was made of things that are invisible.

Far-flung worlds, distant galaxies, and stars of varied sizes and colors are made up of atoms that the human eye can’t see. These atoms exist but remain invisible. All the material things we see are composed of things unseen—as the writer to the Hebrews declared, by faith, almost 2,000 years ago. ↻

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