



bits from bob....

Faith: Confidence and Conviction
June 29, 2020

Hebrews 11:1 says two things about faith: faith is confidence about things hoped for; faith is conviction concerning things unseen. Heb. 11:1 is the writer's follow-up to Heb. 10:23 – "he who promised is faithful." Confidence and hope in God's promises are undergirded by the faithfulness of the God we have not seen. Hebrews 11:6 reflects the same two truths. Faith is conviction concerning the existence of the God we do not see; faith is confidence that he faithfully keeps his promises so that our hope for the reward (recompense) is certain.

These two aspects of faith organize Hebrews 11. The writer begins by describing unseen things that merit conviction: the created visible universe was not made from visible things (v. 3), Abel sacrificed acceptably without seeing (v. 4), Enoch walked with the God he did not see physically (v. 5), faith draws near to God in the conviction (or belief) that he exists (v. 6), Noah believed God about things as yet unseen (v. 7), Abraham left his land without seeing where he was going (v. 8), Abraham looked for a unseen city (v. 10). Sarah believed that the one who promised was faithful (v. 11).

Then the writer moves on to examples of confidence and hope in God's promise: confidence in God's reward (v. 6), Noah the heir of righteousness (v. 7), Abraham and his descendants anticipating the promise (vv. 8-10), Sarah believing God's promise although she did not see Him. The chapter continues with descriptions of those who hoped in God's promise – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites, Rahab, and many more of whom the list in v. 32 is only an introduction (see vv. 33-38). None received or saw the fulfillment of the promises, but they are witnesses who demonstrate that faith is confidence in our hope for the promise and conviction about the faithful God.

Message and meaning. Step one—understand the text, understand the message. Step two—find the meaning, or we can also say, apply the message. Four lessons.

~Faith and hope are interconnected. Hope is an essential element of faith. In Heb. 11, hope is based in God's promises. Trust (conviction) is based in God's existence and God's nature.

~Heb. 11:6 connects the two – belief that God is (exists) and that he rewards diligent seekers.

~The great examples of faith about which we read in Hebrews 11 are those could not see but who accepted the promise of a faithful God anyway. They lived with conviction and confidence.

~Faith ultimately focuses on things unseen yet hoped for – things that transcend this earth.

Verses 39-40 are variously translated in modern versions. I find a relatively literal translation helpful: "And these all, being witnesses through their faith, did not obtain the promise since God was looking ahead to a better something involving us, so that they would not experience the fulfillment without us."

May we follow their example of faith. When we cannot see and yet we confidently hope in anticipation of receiving what God has promised, when conviction is without any visible evidence – may we be faithful, because the one who promised is faithful. Conviction – confidence, focused on God's existence and promises. This is biblical faith!