

Hebrews

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December 13, 2023
Hebrews 11:1-3



Vs. 1

- When you are about to be persecuted as these people were about to be, when you can see the disaster about to strike, when things seem hopeless and darkness is all around you, this is the time, the preacher says, that we are to have faith. "How?", we ask, "We cannot see a way out!". No, we can't see, but it's not important that **WE** see. It's only important that we have faith.
- Faith, the preacher tells us, is the substance/assurance/certainty of things hoped for and the conviction/evidence of things not seen. Faith is absolutely certainty that what is believed is solid truth. It is Job saying in 19:25, "I **know** my Redeemer lives!". In the persecution to come under the Emperor Domitian, a humble Christian, just a common man, was brought before the magistrate for refusing to deny Christ and proclaim the emperor a god. The judge asked him if he really thought that someone as low as he was, would go to God and His glory? "I do not think so", said the man, "I **know** so."
- 2 Corinthians 5:7 – "for we walk by faith and not by sight." So often people go through life always fearful because the future seems so uncertain. But to those who live by faith, who walk by faith, the future is nothing to fear. It is by faith that the Proverbs 31 woman smiles at the future (Proverbs 31:25). It is not cliché when we say that we don't not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. It is not cliché because it is the Truth. God is already waiting for us in the future. He has already made a way. It may not be a way we would have chosen. It may not even be a way that we like or prefer. But it is a Way chosen for us straight from the heart of God and His amazing grace and unfathomable love.

Vs 2

- For most of the rest of the chapter the preacher gives example after example of how the Old Testament heroes became heroes. It was by their actions which were motivated by their faith. Their personal courage, their personal ethics, their morals,

their wisdom, all failed time and time again. But their faith showed them where to step and when common sense said there was no hope, God came shining through and they trusted Him. So the preacher wants us to lean into that and have the faith of those who came before us.

Vs. 3

- This is a profound and amazing statement. Cynics often are dismissive of scripture as being nothing more than mythic stories told by pre-scientific people, but here the writer of Hebrews speaks of other worlds than earth and understands the basic elements of Creation and how God created all things “*ex nihilo*” – out of nothing.
- The Scottish theologian and Bible translator, James Moffatt, says that we need to be sure to see three things here. **1)** Christian faith is a belief in God against the world. “If we follow the world's standards, we may well have ease and comfort and prosperity; if we follow God's standards, we may well have pain and loss and unpopularity. It is the conviction of the Christian that it is better to suffer with God than to prosper with the world.” Better to die in the fiery furnace and go to God than to live under an evil king's laws. In the perspective of eternity, it is better to stake everything on God than anything a sinful world has to offer. **2)** Christian faith is belief in the Holy Spirit against our own senses. Robert Herrick's classic poem tells us to “Gather ye rose-buds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying; And this same flower that smiles today, Tomorrow will be dying”. Live for today. Eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow you die. This type of fatalism is the inevitable result of trusting in our senses. But by faith we **know** there is something more beyond the grave. **3)** Christian faith is belief against the present. Often we want to sacrifice Truth because we believe that it is expedient to do so for the present. One result is “situational ethics” where we tell ourselves it is ok to do this evil today because it will turn out alright in the future. But such an attitude suggests that we do not believe that God is bigger than the problem before us, that we should take matters into our own hands, that we know better than God how to resolve the current crisis.
- Faith is the assurance that God truly does have the whole world in His hands and He is neither surprised nor stumped by our current condition. Like the Veggie Tales told us, “God is bigger than the boogie man!”