

Grow Inward and Strengthened in Faith Աճել՝ Հաստատուած Հաւատքի Մէջ

Hebrews 11:1-7

Illustration: A man was climbing a hill. He slipped and started to slide down. Eventually, he was able to grab a tree branch and held on to it. While he dangled in the air, he started praying: “God I have faith in you. Please help me.” There was a silence. He prayed again: “God I love you. I worship you. I believe in you. I have faith in you, HELP ME.” Suddenly he heard a voice. “Have faith, let go of the branch and jump.” The man did not like that. He repeated the same request only to receive the same answer. After several attempts he gave up asking and hung there all night. In the morning, he lowered his head down and realized that the flat ground was only two feet away. “Have faith, my son, have faith...”

What is faith? To answer this question let us review our main topic: **"Rooted, strengthened and overflowing with thankfulness"** based on Colossians 2:6-7.

We covered **"rooted and built up in him..."** We did talk how to **GROW** downward and upward. Today we move on to next step: To **GROW** inward: **"strengthened (established) in the faith as you were taught."**(Colossians 2:7)

How do we become strengthened or established in our faith?

The verse uses the phrase “as you were taught.” I believe a great way one can grow inward and **get strengthened in faith is to become teachable**. The disciples of Jesus **learned to become teachable**. Paul learned that. After his conversion on the way to Damascus, the arrogant Paul became a teachable disciple. Meekness is one of the flavors of the fruit of the Spirit. And one explanation for the virtue of meekness is being teachable.

In the Bible, we find numerous heroes of faith. These were people whose faith in God was strengthened in the experiences they went through. I will take Hebrews chapter 11 as a blueprint to study faith in God. In the book of Hebrews, faith is mentioned 32 times, of which 24 times are in chapter 11.

We use the word **faith** often in our daily life. “I have faith in this car; it runs well. I have faith in my doctor. I have faith in this pilot.” The Biblical understanding of faith is not just positive thinking about something or someone. Faith is not just hoping for the best, hoping that everything will be good. So what is faith? In the Bible, faith is defined in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. **Not only its definition is mentioned, but also the implications of faith.**

Let us start with the first verse:

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

The word **Assurance** can be translated as, **substance, confidence, anchor** (the new Armenian translation). “The faith described here involves the most solid possible conviction, the God-given present assurance of a future reality.”¹

“Hebrews actually defines faith in relation to hope; it’s one thing to have a hope, but when you have faith underneath it gives it assurance. I may hope for a better world... but unless I believe in the God who raised Jesus, my hope may degenerate into mere optimism.”²

In my words, “I have confidence and assurance that whatever God promises, He will fulfill.”

We all have five senses given by God: Hearing, smelling, seeing, touching, and tasting. **Some will say faith is like a sixth sense;** we receive it as a gift from God at the moment of salvation.³

We live in a world where not everything is seen by the human eye. For example, there are radio waves, telecommunications, and such things we cannot see. If you close your eyes, you will stop seeing anything. **Eyes are a gift from God** and an instrument to see things. **Faith, too, is a gift from God.** Unseen waves like that of the radio, could be heard, measured and even seen if we have the right instrument. **Faith is a gift from God; it helps us to see the reality of God, to experience the reality of God, to see God through Jesus Christ and the Spirit.**

So, the second part of the verse:

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

Faith teaches us that there is an unseen world, which is very important. **Scripture teaches us that it is the invisible things that make life worth living.**

Illustration: Let me give you the example of **a home and a house**. What is the difference between a home and a house? Both are physical structures where people reside. Yet there is a major difference between them. A house can be large mansion, where people are cold and joyless towards each other; they do not have time for each other. **That building is a house but not a home.** Yet members of some other family, who live in a small one-bedroom apartment, experience joy, love and care towards each other. That makes the house a home. **That is a home.** From the outside no one can see if these two structures are homes or not. But inside, the unseen world makes a house a home.⁴

When I accepted Christ in 1976, I started seeing things that I had not seen before. My faith in Christ helped me see the unseen.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9, ESV)

These verses are so real in my life and in the lives of those who have experienced faith. I have faith, and that faith is based on **the truth of Jesus Christ**. The unseen world becomes a reality in my life when I believe in Jesus; it becomes a daily experience walking with HIM. **Faith makes God ALIVE in my life. Faith makes my belief not a theory, or just a topic to discuss, but a relationship and reality.** Faith is not just an abstract, passive word, it is active word.

This way I'll **grow inward**, when I allow God to strengthen my faith.

The first example of faith the author gives is **Creation.**

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, ESV)

In the beginning there was nothing and God created from nothing. He put the laws of gravity, physics, and so on.... The triune God from the beginning was at work. The Spirit of God was moving, and God spoke the Word, Logos. The spoken Word made the universe. I think there is a very important point the writer brings. There is a frequent question asked by Christians and non-Christians. **Why are we here? Why are we created?** Only men and women with faith in God arrived to an answer. **By knowing God, we understand our origin and our purpose.**

Where do we find evidence of God?

Creation (psalm 19); His Word, Scriptures; and in the people of faith (Hebrews 11)

Let us move on to the first hero of faith **Abel**. The story of Cain and Abel, Adam's sons.

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. (Genesis 4:3-5, ESV)

Both sons **were productive, working**. One was in agriculture, the other in farming. Each brought to God whatever they produced in their daily life. God accepted one and rejected the other. Why?

Cain brought not the best, but Abel brought the best, from his heart. THE BEST.

The writer of the Hebrews explains: **"By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain,"** Abel brought his offering BY FAITH. Cain brought his own offering, without faith. Both worked hard; both brought offerings to God; yet God accepted only the one who came in faith and real adoration. God rejected an offering which is not glorifying Him. The sad part of this story, Cain became the first murderer in history, and Abel became the first martyr in history.

We all love to be productive in life. We all strive to do the best. In fact, we lose our job if we do not do the best. Work is a blessing from God. The choice we have to make is whether we live by faith or without faith? **Whom do I glorify, my God or my name?** My God or my work? My God or my family? My God or my reputation? My God or my pleasure?

How much do we know about Abel? How many verses were written about him?

I love what the author of Hebrews says:

God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4, ESV)

We do not have any single thing written about Abel's words. I cannot find any sentence he spoke. His life of faith, even though he died, still speaks today. What mark do you want to leave behind when you're gone from this world?

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen."

Do you trust God? Do you want to please HIM? Do you glorify Him in your life?

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6, ESV)

Seeking God is a choice you make. That will help you to grow inward, strengthened in your faith. That pleases God.

Next week I will go over other the heroes of faith:

Here is a summary of what one can see in chapter 11 about faith. I like what pastor David Jeremiah did:

"Faith for the Christian is not a passive attribute. Faith is an active attribute.

Faith brings the proper sacrifice.

Faith enables you to walk with God.

Faith builds an Ark when it has never rained.

Faith goes on not knowing where it's going.
Faith dwells in camps in a foreign country.
Faith looks for a city whose builder and maker is God.
Faith receives strength to bear a child when the mother has passed the age of childbearing.
Faith offers up one's own son in obedience.
Faith believes in the resurrection.
Faith promises not to leave Jacob's bones in Egypt.
Faith refuses to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter.
Faith chooses to suffer affliction with the people of God.
Faith esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.
Faith forsakes Egypt for the Promised Land.
Faith passes the Red Seas on dry ground.
Faith walks around the walls of Jericho till the walls fall down
Faith subdues kingdoms, works righteousness, obtains promises, stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of fire, escapes the edge of the sword, puts to flight the armies of the aliens,
Faith receives the dead back to life.
Faith receives the promise.”⁵

Our faith is not passive, our faith is active. It transforms our life. It gives us strength to carry on with our daily walk. Next week one can see, none of the heroes of faith are spectacular, extraordinary people. They are simple people, but they have faith in God, which makes their life extraordinary.

1 John MacArthur Study Bible Hebrews 11

2 N.T. Wright *Hebrews for Everyone* P 128

3 David Jeremiah, *What is Faith?* July 7, 2013

4 Steve Zeisler, *Faith That Pleases God*, PBC

5 David Jeremiah, *What is Faith?*