

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Missions Conference will soon be here! And as has been our custom for many years, the emphasis will be faith. We support our missionaries on the faith promise concept, i.e., allowing the freewill offerings of God's people to be the sole support of our missionaries. Christchurch Baptist Fellowship is an independent Baptist church, which means many things, one of them being we are not dependent upon a denomination to be our proverbial "safety net" to cover for us, or our missionaries. We are, however, dependent on the Lord to meet our needs as well as the needs of our missionaries who obey, as we attempt to obey the admonition, "...we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). The Lord willing, from now until Dr. Keen joins us on the 29th of April to begin our Mission's Conference, I would like to challenge all of us from the Scriptures on this matter of faith. The best known chapter in the Bible on the subject of faith is Hebrews 11. Let's open it up and unpack the first six verses.

1. THE CONVICTION THAT LIES WITHIN US

Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

The word from which we translate "substance" is the Greek word, "hupostasis" which means a setting under, a support, concrete, essence, assurance, confidence. I like the word chosen by the translators of the Authorized Version, "substance," which means the most important or essential part of something. In other words, if we miss this, we miss everything.

The word from which we translate "evidence" is the Greek word, "elegchos," which means proof or conviction. Romans 1:20 speaks of invisible things, made by the invisible God. Colossians 1:17 testifies that God is not only invisible, but as I Timothy 1:17 points out is immortal, the King Eternal and the only wise God. And we endure as did Moses by seeing by faith Him who is invisible as Hebrews 11:27 tells us. When Paul records the effort of false teachers to "...overthrow the faith of some" (II Timothy 2:18b), he quickly affirms, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure..." (II Timothy 2:19a). Hebrews 11:3 says, "Through faith we understand..." The word "understand" is translated from the Greek word, "noieo," which means to exercise the mind and to think. To follow Christ by faith does not mean we leave our brains aside; on the contrary, living by faith is by far, the most intelligent thing one can do! Consider...

2. THE TESTIMONIES THAT GO BEFORE US

Hebrews 11:2: “For by it the elders obtained a good report.”

“Good report” in Greek is “martureo” means to be a good witness, make a meaningful testimony and to bear an excellent record. These elders or highly respected servants of the Lord that have led the way of faith for those who come after have left quite a testimony, as we shall see in more detail in the later verses of Hebrews 11, often called the “Hall of Faith.” To grasp the meaning of obtaining a good report, we shall look at the verses previously given in Hebrews 10 as the ideal template for a great testimony. In Hebrews 10:34, 35 we see the “substance” of Heaven is joined to the Christian who is walking by faith in the earth. The result is our confidence will be bolstered. We learn in Hebrews 10:36-39 that we need to patiently wait by faith and not turn back. This will assure for us a “good report.”

3. THE DISPLAY OF ALL THAT IS AROUND US

Hebrews 11:3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

We read in Colossians 1:16, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for Him.” In John 1:1-3 we see that the worlds were made by Christ, The Word of God. I agree with Norman Geisler and Frank Turek who wrote, “I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.”

Allow me to let you hear from the unbiased assessment of some of the leading scientific minds of our time: John Polkinghorn (professor of quantum theory at Cambridge) said, “If you examine the early relationship between expansion and contraction forces in the early picoseconds of the universe, you will see that the exactitude was so precise that the margin of error and the precision required would be like taking aim at a one square inch object twenty billion light-years away (on the other end of the universe) and hitting that bull's eye.” He went on to say, “When you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly finely tuned to produce the universe we see, that conspires to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it.”

Paul Davies (English physicist writer and professor at Arizona State University and has held previous academic appointments at the University of Cambridge, University College London, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Adelaide and Macquarie University) said, “There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all...It seems as though somebody has fine tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe...The impression of design is overwhelming.”

Dr. Paul Brand put it like this: “The more I delve into natural laws – the atom, the universe, the solid elements, molecules, the sun, and even more, the interplay of all the mechanisms required to sustain life – I am astounded. The whole creation could collapse like a deck of cards if just one of those factors were removed. Some people really believe that all the design and precision in nature came about by chance, and that if millions of molecules bombard each other long enough, a nerve cell and sensory ending at exactly the right threshold will be bound to turn up. To those people I merely suggest that they try to make one, as I did, and see what chance is up against.”

Donald Page of Princeton’s Institute for Advanced Science calculated the odds against our universe randomly taking a form suitable for life as one in 10,000,000,000¹²⁴. That is one in ten billion to the 124th power! This is a number so large, it is safe to say that the universe did not come together randomly. It was created by an incredibly intelligent and powerful designer.”

Charles Townes, Nobel Prize-winning physicist stated, “Many have a feeling that somehow intelligence must have been involved in the laws of the universe...I strongly sense the presence and actions of a creative being far beyond myself and yet always personal and close by.”

4. THE WITNESS THAT SPEAKS POSTHUMOUSLY

Hebrews 11:4: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

The first person mentioned in this “Hall of Faith” is Abel. In Genesis 4, we observe that Abel brought the sacrificial lamb (symbol of atonement provided by grace) before the Lord and the Lord received the blood sacrifice rather than Cain’s vegetables (symbol of man’s efforts, that which is obtained by man’s sweat). The precedent is set. Later the Bible discloses, “...Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). It is through the blood of Christ that we now have the entry into the life of faith.

5. THE LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD

Hebrews 11:5, 6: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

The faith life is so good that it pleases God. If I may inject a little homespun anecdote here, Enoch walked with God. He spent his days pleasing God and living in His presence. One day God came to him and said, “Enoch, I like the way that you are spending the days with me and walking in this dedicated walk of faith. I

should like for you to come up to Heaven and spend the day with me. And the reason Enoch never came back is because there is no night there; he 's still spending the day with God!

Anyone who lives the life of faith pleases God. Oh, how blessed to come to the end of our life and to be able to say with Jesus in John 8:29, "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.