



## Hebrews 11:1-3

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. 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.”*

### SUMMARY

Hebrews was written to believers whose enthusiasm for the gospel was being worn down (10:32-34). Following Jesus was costly, and the idea of giving it all up and returning to their former life of Judaism was starting to look appealing.

To counter this, Hebrews includes several “warning” passages (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29). The one immediately before Hebrews 11 ends with a call for endurance and faith (10:36-39), and according to 10:39, “those who have faith” are contrasted with “those who shrink back and are destroyed.” In other words, the crucial difference between those who endure and those who don’t is faith (see 3:16-4:2).

Nothing, then, is more important or practical than faith. So, what exactly *is* faith? It’s “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (v 1) While not a full definition of faith, the author highlights two aspects of it that are particularly relevant for his audience.

The first (“assurance of things hoped for”) is focused on the future. People of faith have a firm confidence that God will do what he’s promised to do, and they remain confident even if the fulfillment of those promises is far off (even beyond their lifetime!). By faith, God’s people trust that our best days are *ahead* of us in the world to come.

The second aspect of faith (“conviction of things not seen”) is focused on the present. By faith, we’re to trust that no matter what is going on in our life, our circumstances don’t tell the full story. Faith trusts that beneath visible circumstances are the invisible activities of a God who loves us.

A life focused on promises not yet fulfilled and realities not yet seen is understandably challenging. But Hebrews 11 is one long reminder that this kind of life is nothing new for God's people (v 2). In fact, the idea of faith grasping invisible realities is nothing new to anyone who believes that God created the world (v 3). To believe this is to agree with the author's point that we can be certain of things we can't physically see.

## **DISCUSS**

Read Romans 8:28-30. According to this passage, what is God *always* doing beneath the surface of our visible circumstances?

Looking back on your life, what was a trial you went through that can now clearly see God's invisible activity at work in? How did he use that experience to make you more like Jesus?

Looking at your life right now, in what circumstances do you need to be reminded that God is present and at work?

Read 1 Peter 1:13. What does Peter tell us to set out "hope" on? Spend time praying that God would increase your assurance that that day will come.