

# REFLECTION ON WHAT IS FAITH

What is faith?

We may be tempted to make faith something like a vague feeling or a form of optimism.

Someone may think: since we are not — and cannot — be sure of anything, we sort of believe for the best, we have an educated guess that God will be good to us and we have “faith” in Him, simply because we cannot have a certainty of Him nor in Him.

The explanation and teaching from the letter to the Hebrews is much different: it is, in fact, quite the opposite and it is very powerful.

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. [NKJV]

Many of us have read this verse many times: it has been important for me to understand the depth and strength of these words: substance and evidence.

The first is substance, in Greek *υποστασις*: it means foundation, pedestal, that which supports. Faith is that which sustains our hope in the promises of God. His promises are founded upon our belief in Him.

If we do not believe in Him, His promises are of no use.

Let us remember what happened, when Jesus returned to Nazareth:

**Matthew 13:58** And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. [NASB]

The cause of the lack of many miracles was their unbelief and their lack of faith in Him.

First lesson: Faith is what makes us sure of what we hope for.

The second word is evidence, in Greek, *ελεγχος*: it means proof that something exists. Faith is the demonstration of reality. The unseen promises of God become real because of our faith. Faith gives us proof of what we cannot see.

Here is a powerful example from the apostle John: are the salvation and eternal life promised by Jesus real? Or are we going to hell?

The answer is that it depends: those who have faith in Jesus and His redemption are indeed saved from eternal damnation; those who do not have faith are condemned already.

**John 3:18–19** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. [ESV]

The difference between being condemned and not being condemned is faith: “believing in the name of the only Son of God.”

We may conclude with this observation of the Apostle Paul, who turns all logic around and strengthens our belief:

**Romans 8:24** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [ESV]

Hope is the reality of our salvation and it is real precisely in that it is hope and not in that it is seen with our carnal eyes.

That is the theology; the practicality is expressed by the Apostle Peter:

**1 Peter 1:8** You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. [NLT]