

Biblical Faith # 2 It's Essence Part 1

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by **Hal Molloy** at

Holly Hills Bible Church

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Biblical Faith – It's Essence - Part 1 - Biblical Faith # 2 - June 17, 2001

Our study this morning is going to be on faith. Personally I believe it is one of the most misunderstood subjects in Christendom today.

**Some of your definitions of faith were:
trust, dependence, rest, reliance on, proof, a gift..**

Last week I asked you, "When you think of faith, what comes to your mind, what's your frame of reference about faith?". You responded that when you think of faith, that it's trust, dependence, rest, reliance on.. and somebody said proof, and somebody said that it's a gift.

We tend to think of faith as ours.

As I thought about those responses, most of them had to do with our faith, our trust, our dependence, our reliance, and that was fine. And what we did is, we went through some passages of scripture to see if your definition and your understanding of faith matched what scripture said.

Matthew 8 - Roman Centurion - personal faith

So we went to Matthew chapter 8 and we looked at the Roman Centurion who believed that the Lord Jesus Christ could heal his servant by just speaking a word, and the Lord Jesus Christ responded that He had not seen so great a faith in all of Israel. And this was a Roman Centurion.

Hebrews 11 - God's hall of fame - personal faith

Then we looked at what I like to call the "hall of famers", God's "hall of famers" in the book of Hebrews. By faith Abel offered a more perfect sacrifice, by faith Enoch was translated, by faith Abraham, by faith Sarah. And we asked the question, does our understanding of faith, trust, reliance, dependence and all of that, does that match with what scripture says about the faith of all of these people?

And we said yes, that's a one to one match.

With the exception of two of the responses, because one of the responses was that faith was proof, and the other response was that faith was a gift. And as we read through those passages, those definitions of faith didn't match the passages that we read, but they will match some other passages.

Faith must have an object

An important observation is this. When we talk about personal faith, which most of you were talking about, faith must have an object. And we never looked at the object of these peoples faith. We didn't focus on the object, we just said that by faith they did this, by faith they did that.

Many words must have an object

I love (verb) . . I have love (noun) . .

When we say that faith must have an object, there are many words that must have an object. For example, if I say that I love, where I use it as a verb, I love. I need to have a direct object to finish that sentence, to complete it, I love what? The Broncos? My wife. I need to complete it, it has to have an object, otherwise, it's not a complete thought.

I have faith (noun) . . I believe (verb) . .

Faith requires an object, so if I use it as a noun, I have faith, I have to tell you what the object of that faith is. So if I say faith and I use it as a verb, you would say, I believe. I have to tell you what I believe, it takes an object.

What was the object of the faith of the "hall of famers"?

So, what was the object of all of these "hall of famers" faith that we read about last week. Now, I want to do this, I want to postpone the answer, and we're going to answer the question. But, my purpose right now is to look at the big picture in terms of faith.

Personal faith

So, so far, we've looked at the "personal" aspect of faith, and our understanding of faith in terms of how it's used personally.

Now what I want to do is look at some other passages, where if we translated faith by dependence, reliance, and rest, and those definitions.. that the definition would be kind of out of place if we put that definition in the passages that we're going to look at. That tells us something. These passages have a different meaning with respect to faith.

I want you to turn to the first one, Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. The focus of the book of Ephesians is on the Church, the Body of Christ. It describes what God has done for the Body of Christ, all of those who have put their trust and personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 11, . . . and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Why did he give them? For the perfecting of the saints. For the work of the ministry, for the edifying or the building up of the Body of Christ, that is, you and me, as the Body of Christ.

Verse 13, till we all come in the unity of **the faith**. Now, is this saying that we all should come into unity in our personal faith? That every one of our personal faiths should be identical? That our trust, that our reliance, and our dependence, that they should be identical somehow? Why the definite article? Till we all come into the unity of the faith. What does the faith mean? When there's a definite article it designates something specific. What faith is it designating here?

Eph 4:11

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

I'm not going to answer it, I just want you to get the big picture, that when you talk about faith, sometimes faith is associated with the definite article, the faith. And it means something different than our personal faith.

And then just to finish the verse, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. You know, one of the questions was what's the difference between faith and knowledge? Is there a difference between faith and knowledge? Here's a passage that talks about faith and knowledge.

Unto a perfect man. Are we going to be perfect? Let me ask you a question. Are we perfect? How many sitting here today are perfect? Wow! Now, I want you to know that we got a lot of hands raised, and I want you to know that there's a lot of people scratching their heads. How can these people say that they're perfect? How are they perfect?

As you come to scripture, you have to ask the question, is this talking about a positional truth? Something that is true of us positionally? That this truth will never change, it's immutable. That this truth is an everlasting truth. Truth about us now and forever more. That's positional. Or is it conditional? That sometimes I'm perfect and sometimes I'm not as I walk moment by moment.

This is a positional truth. This is true about us as to who we are in Christ, positionally. He sees us as perfect because he also says to us that there's nothing more to be added. If there's nothing more to be added, then we have to be perfect, positionally. But now we are growing, growing to understand what we are and who we are in Christ.

Finishing up verse 13. Unto the measure, and here is the measure, listen to this, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So, there's a passage of scripture that has this definite article.

Now, what I'd like to do is look at another aspect of faith, where it doesn't have the definite article, but it has another word associated with faith, Romans 3:21.

I want you to observe in verse 22 and verse 25 it uses the word faith and ask yourself the question, what faith is it talking about in those 2 verses. Starting in verse 21, but now the righteousness of God apart from the law, or law, there's no definite article in the Greek, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith.

What faith is that? I think that's personal faith. That when we trust and put our trust and faith in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God imputes His righteousness to us which is by our faith. Our faith of Jesus Christ, and I think that's what is called an "objective genitive". Which you can translate, . . . 'by faith in Jesus Christ', . . . unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, or a satisfaction, through what? Faith. Through personal faith? I think personal faith is involved there.

Through faith, in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare I say at this time, His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who **believes** in Him. So, here's the verb form of faith, believing in Jesus Christ.

Rom 3:21

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Now, focus on verse 27. Where is boasting then? Answer? It is excluded, by what law? of works? No, by the law of faith.

Here we have another usage of the word faith, by the **law** of **faith**, and you can translate **law** as a **principle**, “by **the principle** of **faith**”. Is it talking about our personal faith? It may be included. It certainly is another aspect of faith when it talks about the **law** of **faith** or the **principle** of **faith**. So, here is another aspect of faith.

Rom 3:27
Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the **law** of faith.

Personal faith **The faith** **Faith as a principle**

So far, we've seen three aspects of faith. We first looked at the **personal** aspect of **faith**, we then looked at faith with the definite article, **the faith**, talking about something specific, and we just now looked at **faith** as a **principle**. So those are three aspects, so far, of faith.

As you go through every single verse in the New Testament and categorize every single verse, there is one more category of faith.

Heb 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Question. Is it talking about **the** faith? Well, there's no definite article there. Is it talking about our **personal** faith? That our personal faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen? Or, is it talking about faith as a **principle**?

I think we have here another category of faith or another aspect of faith, and that's faith in terms of its **essence**. This passage describes the **essence** of **faith**.

4 MAJOR ASPECTS OF BIBLICAL FAITH

- 1. FAITH - ITS ESSENCE**
- 2. FAITH - THE FAITH**
- 3. FAITH - PERSONAL**
- 4. FAITH - AS A PRINCIPLE**

So, where we're going, is to try to understand these aspects of faith. We're going to start with faith in its essence, because when you talk about the essence of faith, that's the building block. If we understand the essence of faith, we will be able to understand all of the other aspects of faith, the faith, personal faith, and faith as a principle. The essence of faith is the building block, and it is critical. And I just want to drill it into your mind that it's critical that we understand the essence of faith.

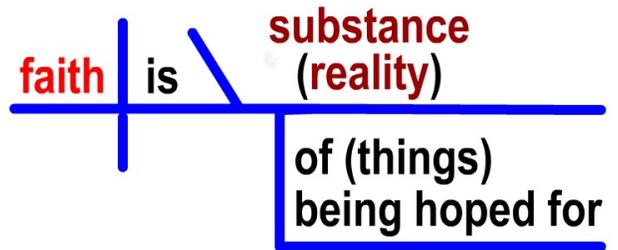
QUESTIONS

- 1. WHAT IS NON-BIBLICAL FAITH?**
- 2. IS FAITH A GIFT?**
- 3. IS FAITH A WORK?**
- 4. ARE FAITH AND BELIEF THE SAME?**
- 5. ARE THERE DEGREES OF FAITH?**
- 6. DOES OUR FAITH GROW OR INCREASE?**
- 7. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAITH & KNOWLEDGE?**
- 8. DOES GOD TEST OUR FAITH?**
- 9. DOES FAITH DETERMINE OUR WALK?**
- 10. WHAT ENERGIZES OUR FAITH?**

Remember those ten questions I put up last week? To understand the essence of faith is going to help us understand the answers to every one of those 10 questions.

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

We're going to look at Hebrews 11:1. In order to understand this passage of scripture, you have to understand what the subject is, what the verb is, what the direct object is. So, it starts out, subject, "faith". And then, the verb, "is". And then, what we would normally call the direct object, but in this case it is not called a direct object.



Remember from English, when you have the verb "to be" that the object was called what? The word substance, what is that called? This is called a subject complement, and in the Greek this is called a predicate nominative.

"Is" in English is called a linking verb. What it does, it links the subject to the object, or it ties the subject to what we normally would call the direct object, in any other sentence without a verb "to be", or linking verb, the subject is never tied to the object.

So if I say "I hit the ball", "I" is the subject, and "the ball" is the direct object, there's no link between me and the ball. The ball does not describe me, it doesn't identify me, it's independent of me.

In a sentence where there is a linking verb, in the Greek it's called an essence verb, and an essence verb is a verb of status quo. It tells you the state that something continuously exists in, and it ties the subject & complement together. In the Greek this is called the predicate nominative. I don't want to get too complicated here, but if it's a noun it's called a predicate nominative, and if it's an adjective it's called a predicate adjective.

This is a noun, so it ties this noun's state with this noun's substance. It ties them together, and it says, that **the state in which faith continuously exists is substance.**

And the question you have to ask is what's **substance**? If you look at this word, *hupostasis*, it means "reality". One of the definitions of substance is "**reality**". So we can say this, . . . that faith in its essence, . . . **it's intrinsic about faith that it is reality.** It's the state in which it continuously exists, reality.

Now, let me ask the question. Do you think that's describing our faith? Some shake their heads no. In no way! When we're talking about this, we're talking about something that never changes.

Does our faith change? It certainly does! So, it certainly is not talking about our faith. **This is independent of our faith**, totally independent.

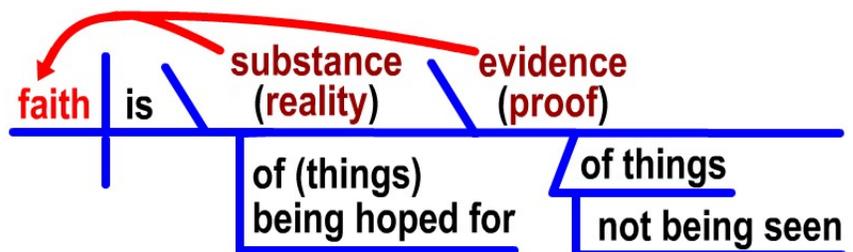
Faith is reality. What's the reality? Faith is reality, faith is something that is real, that is true, 100% of the time it's real. What is that reality?

The verse goes on, of things hoped for. Now the question is, what are the "things"? And, what does "hoped for" mean? Is it things that are wished for? Does hope mean wish?

Let me tell you what I think the answer is, **the things** that it's talking about, in the context here, **are the things of God**, everything that is related to God.

And when we talk about God, we're talking about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Everything that is related to them. And then it says, "hoped for", and in our vernacular and in our understanding of the word "hope" we interpret it as wish. It does not have one iota of that meaning in the Greek. That word "**hope**", *elpidzo*, **means confidence, certainty.** Not only certainty but **absolute certainty.** So you can translate it this way, that **faith is reality, reality of the things of God which are an absolute certainty.**

Now, the verse goes on, and it talks about the evidence of things not seen. This is another predicate nominative. See that line pointing back to the subject? It means that this relates to the subject, that "reality" relates to the subject, it defines it, and by this line "evidence" or "proof", relates to the subject.



And someone last week, when I asked the question, "what does faith mean?", one of the answers was "proof". And that's exactly right. Here it is, that faith is proof. Of what? It's of things. What things? Things of God. What things of God?

The things that are not being seen. The verb there for "**seen**" is not the word for perception, it's the word *blepo* in the Greek, which means that which we visually see, or **something that we can't visually see.** It's saying that we can't visually see the things of God. **But, are they real? Absolutely. They are reality.**

Faith is Reality

If I were to put this in a more user friendly fashion. **Faith is reality.** It's reality in the **things of God** and these things of God are an **absolute certainty.**

Now comes your turn. What are these things of God, which are an absolute certainty, which are a proof of the things not seen? What are these things of God? What do you think of when you think of the things of God that are reality? Bob says.. he holds up the Bible and says, how about **His revelation?**

What else? **His essence**, very good! Can you see His essence? What is His essence? The sum total of **who He is**. What are some of the attributes of His essence? Ok, **love, mercy, omniscience, omnipresence, veracity, truth**, the fact that He's **eternal**, that He's **sovereign**.

So, if we think of the things of God that you can't see, that certainly has to do with his essence, the totality of **Who He is**. His **holiness**, His **righteousness**, the fact that He's **just**, the fact that He's **infinite** as some of you said. You can't box God, you can't circle Him in, because He's infinite. But when we think about the things of God, those are some of the things, in terms of Who He is.

How about what He's done? And let me handle it in three parts, not only **what He's done**, but **what He's doing**, and **what He will do**. So, what He has done is **creation**. So when it says the things of God, **creation is reality**.

Here we are. How did we get here? Did we get here through an ape or a chimp? Or did God create us? God says, that He created us in His image and His likeness. That's what He said, and so when Bob held up scripture, and says, everything that's in here. Well, it tells us that He created the universe.

And **He created it in 6 days**, 6 literal days, 6 twenty-four hour days. How do we know that? Because that's what the scripture says, it was the first "yom" the second "yom" and the third "yom". And how do we know that "yom" means a twenty-four hour day? Well, we know it means a twenty-four hour day because every time the word day, "yom" is preceded by a numerical ordinal it always means a literal twenty-four hour day.

Can you prove that from scripture? Sure! You go over to Exodus chapter 20, it says, thou shalt keep the Sabbath day holy. How? Well, just as God created the heavens and earth in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day, that you shall rest on the 7th day and keep the Sabbath day holy. Is it millions and billions of year-days up here in Genesis? Well if it is then you have to translate that we're going to work millions and billions of years, 6 of those, and then rest for millions and billions of years.

So, things of God, what He has done. What else has He done? Did He **judge the earth** at one time, with a world wide flood? Did He tell Noah to build an ark and save eight souls, and flooded the entire earth?

How about the most important thing. He sent the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Cross, and His burial and His resurrection, that's another thing He has done. How do we know that? **The Word of God tells us that**, and so the **only** thing we have to tell us that, in terms of the things of God, is the Word of God.

It tells us not only what He has done, it tells us what He's doing now, and it tells us what He will do. And **He's going to come back**, and God is going to judge this earth again, not by water but there's going to be a terrible judgment on this earth for a period of 7 years.

In all of this, **with respect to the things of God, are any of those things dependent on us?** Were we instrumental in any one of those things? **Zero!** We had absolutely nothing to do with any of them. Nothing!

The essence of **Biblical faith** has zero to do with us

So do you see where faith as to essence, as a reality, has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with you and me, in terms of the essence of faith.

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

This is what is called Biblical faith. Do you want to know what Biblical faith is, **Hebrews 11:1 is what Biblical faith is**. It has nothing to do with us.

Can we enter into this? We sure can. And we're going to see later on how we enter into this. But right now, when we talk about faith, Biblical faith, it has zero to do with us.

FAITH → **REALITY**
HEB 11:1

