

When Times Are Tough

by

Mark McGee

The Apostles knew about tough times. They wrote often about how God's children can face trouble and opposition. God did not leave us defenseless.

“Now the just shall live by faith ... Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 10:38 – 11:1

The writer to the Hebrews made a bold statement to his readers. He wrote that the “just” will live by “faith” and “faith” is the “substance” of things hoped for and the “evidence” of things not seen. Every Christian knows that “faith” is necessary for salvation (“For by grace are ye saved through faith”), but many of us forget that “faith” is how we are supposed to live on Earth. Living by “faith” is not strange or unusual. It is the normal Christian life. We don't depend completely on God for eternal life, then depend completely or even partially on ourselves for this life on earth. The just live by “faith.”

As examples, the writer mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel and the Prophets. Through faith these people “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women

received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Let's get a few word definitions to help us understand what God means here. "Faith" is *pistis*. It is a "firm persuasion based on hearing." We are firmly persuaded by what we hear. We are convinced without doubt because we know the One Who tells us is True.

“Substance” is *hupostasis*. It means “reality, assurance, essence, substance, foundation, guarantee.” In Hebrews 1:3, Jesus Christ is called the *charakter tes hupostasis* of God. He is the “representation of the reality” of God’s Character. When you see Christ, you see the God and His Character. Christ could be seen, heard and felt. He was real to His disciples. He is the Reality of God. So it is with things in our life. The “faith” we have in Christ is our “reality,” our “substance,” our “guarantee.”

Faith is the reality “of things hoped for” (*elpizomenon*). This is what we “expect with desire.” We have many passions in life. It may be a person, a belief, a job, opportunities to help others, things. Faith is the reality of whatever we expect with desire. Faith means that what we hope for is “reality.”

Faith is also “the evidence of things not seen.” “Evidence” is *elegchos*. It is the “proof by test.” The word was used of truthful evidence against the accused that led to a conviction and reproof. “Things not seen” is *pragmaton ou blepomenon*. It means things that can’t be seen by the eyes. Faith is the “proof” of things we cannot see with our physical eyes.

If we are facing tough times and have great hope that things will improve to our liking, what do we do? We believe God. We have faith. It is the reality of things we hope for. It is the proof of what we cannot see.

“Faith” is delightful and difficult, easy and hard at the same time. We are human. That means we are imperfect and needy. We make mistakes. We mess up. We hurt and feel things deeply. We worry. We care deeply. We want so much for things to be better than they are. What does God give us to deal with all these concerns? “Faith.” We believe what He says. We ask, then listen. We don’t lose heart.

How do we live a “faith-life?” We keep believing God’s Word. We keep walking forward, one step at a time. We cast our cares on Christ because He cares for us. We pray instead of worry. We have faith because the faith God placed in our heart and mind at the moment of salvation is the “substance” and “evidence” we need to get through the tough times. It is more than enough.