

# **Jesus Christ - The Author and Finisher of Our Faith**

## **in the Book of Hebrews**

### **(Part 3 - Chapters 11-13)**

#### **Meeting 1**

*"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul"* (Heb. 10:36-39). The Lord is coming back soon; we need to endure just a little while more. And we not only need to endure, but we also must do the will of God and finish it to receive the promise. And for us to go on, we must live by faith and be those who believe to the saving of our soul! This way of faith is so wonderful!

The most important truth Martin Luther recovered was justification by faith. That was a very good beginning, without which there would not have been the Reformation. From that time until today, the common definition of faith is to believe. But today, apart from believing, many Christians do not have any further understanding of the definition of faith. Once we receive this faith, it has to grow! Unfortunately, it takes a long time to grow because we easily get stuck: we just want to believe in God, believe that Jesus Christ died for us, that we received salvation by faith and that we don't have to do anything because faith is a free gift of God. Free things are great because you don't have to pay or do anything for them, right? Yes, but receiving everything for free is only normal when you are a child! When children are young, they just have to believe, and they receive everything for free from their parents who work very hard! But as they grow in life, they need to mature and also

learn to work hard to earn a living. With our faith it is the same – faith must grow!

That is why in Hebrews 12:2, the Lord Jesus is not only the author of our faith, but He is also the finisher, the perfecter of our faith. We need to go on to the finish line. In kindergarten, you play, sing, have fun and learn. In elementary school and high school, you play less but learn more. It is still education, but it is a higher education. Then you go to college to get a degree, a master's degree, and maybe even a PhD. Spiritually, as long as the Lord has not come back, we need to continue to learn and grow. We should not stop but endure and go on. Then our experience will increase and become richer until we come to the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1. This is a wonderful definition that we must appreciate. This definition of faith is not in Webster's dictionary because this is not what the world understands concerning the matter of faith.

*"Now faith is the **SUBSTANTIATION** of things hoped for"* (Heb. 11:1a). The NKJV translation says, "faith is the substance" which is also correct, but how do you get the substance? You have to substantiate it – it is not just given to you. If you want some bread, I can give it to you – then you would have the substance of the bread. But before receiving it, you have to earn it and pay for it – you need to substantiate it. If you just do nothing and say, "Ok, I believe," nothing will happen. You must have the desire: "Lord, I want the substance of what You are talking about. I want to have the reality. I want to get it." If you don't have that desire and it doesn't matter to you whether you have it or not, and you just "believe" the right teaching, nothing will change. We have heard and believed so many good teachings, but at home nothing happens, and things go on as usual. Do you have the desire to get the substance of what you have heard? Are you substantiating it? Do you want to have the evidence that you have the substance, or do you want to just sit there and keep hoping for it and have nothing happen? It depends on you to substantiate it.

*"Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for."* It is not just a matter of believing. By this point in Hebrews 11, the Lord needs you to have faith,

that is, the desire to substantiate; He needs your cooperation. You cannot just say, "I believe," and keep hoping. No! Nothing will change. Look at our history. The past is good evidence. How much of the truth have you substantiated in your life? Many times the Spirit wants to do something, but you say, "No, not now, Lord." Then when? "Tomorrow," but tomorrow never comes. It must be now! Today! "*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts*" (Heb. 3:7-8, 15; 4:7). That means you must believe and say: "Lord, yes, I want to cooperate with You." This is a very important principle in our human life. When I was child, I wanted a bicycle. My dad said: "I will buy you a bicycle, BUT it depends on your grades in school." Goodness! That was a promise with a condition. My dad wanted to know if I really wanted it, if I would study and work for it. Praise the Lord, I finally got my bike. I substantiated that promise.

Today, at this stage in our Christian life, we have already received the faith of God, and He will not simply substantiate things for us because He desires to see us mature and be perfected – we must substantiate the word of God by faith. If you hear His voice speaking to you, act and react! Suppose God said, "Abraham, I am going to give you the good land," and Abraham responded by saying, "Yes, I believe," but continued to stay in Chaldea. Would he have received the good land? No, he had to take the initiative to leave! If he hadn't been willing to leave his father's house and his fatherland of Chaldea, a land full of idols, he would not have received the promise. Faith is a living reaction on our part!

The faith given to us by God is a very precious faith – it is the faith of God. It is difficult to describe the substance of this faith because it is the faith of God. But you need to be active in substantiating God's Word; otherwise, you won't get the substance, the reality. Hebrews 4 shows us that when we hear the Word of God we must mingle it with faith (Heb. 4:2). Who will do the mingling for you? Will God send Gabriel to get a heavenly machine to mingle the Word with faith while you are reading the Bible? No, **you** have to substantiate it, to get that substance. If you have no desire to substantiate and just sit and believe and hope forever, you won't get it. That is why we translated the verse: "*Faith is the*

*substantiation*" The word "substantiate" is very active, you need to participate to get the reality – especially if you want to grow in your faith. The word "substance" means you have already gotten it.

Many people do not like James, the brother of Jesus, because he said that faith without works is dead (Jam. 2:20). Does that mean the faith God has given you is dead? Did not Paul say that faith is not by works but it is the gift of God given to you (Eph. 2:8-9)? Who is right? Both are right! You cannot do anything to be saved; otherwise, you would not need a Savior. That salvation is the work of God given to you; it is not by works. No one is justified by works (Gal. 2:16) because we are fallen human beings. But there is the other side of the coin. Faith needs substantiation and evidence. If you have faith without evidence, you have nothing. The more you grow in life and see so many wonderful things, the more you need to substantiate it, to pay the price. The initial oil is given to you free, just like the first tank of gas is free in your new car so that you can drive home; but it won't be free forever. Afterwards, you need to keep on filling the tank. How? By cooperating and by paying the price.

When the Lord spoke to the church in Laodicea, He did not say, "Come and get the gold." He said, "*I counsel you to buy from Me gold*" (Rev. 3:18). The ten virgins in Matthew 25 also had to buy oil for their vessels. The difference was that the five wise virgins paid the price to buy the oil during their lifetime – they substantiated their faith – whereas the five foolish ones did not and missed the wedding (Matt. 25:8-10). Pay the price today! Gain Christ! Paul said that he wanted to "*gain Christ*" (Phil. 3:8b). You must pursue – that means you work harder and harder to gain more of Christ. He said, "*Not that I have already attained...but I press on [pursue]*" (Phil. 3:12a). Paul did not pursue doctrine – he already knew all the teachings. He learned the Scripture from the best teacher, Gamaliel. We are not trying to gain doctrine, but to gain Christ. Did the Lord tell His disciples to follow Him by just believing? No, He said, "*let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*" (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). The firstfruits "*are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes*" (Rev. 14:4). Do you think it is easy to follow the Lamb? We don't follow our Master. When He says, "Yes," we say, "No" or "Not now" or "Later." But the Lord wants us to do it now. To say

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“later” means that we don’t want to do it. The problem is we do not substantiate whatever the Lord wants us to do right now!

*“Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Heb. 11:1). Praise the Lord, we are seeing things that cannot be seen by other people because they don’t have the eyes to see them. Paul said, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). By faith we see things other people cannot see. It is as the Lord said: the world *“neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him”* (John 14:17). We see Him – not with our physical eyes, but with the eyes of our hearts. By faith we see the evidence. And there is a lot of evidence! Look at all the wonderful examples in Hebrews 11 who went through so much by faith, and their lives were full of evidence – beginning with Abel and going on to the prophets and the martyrs – for them, it was not just believing without a visible result. The world did not see the evidence because they did not have the eyes to see. But the evidence was very solid! Do you see the evidence in each case in Hebrews 11? Noah’s faith had very solid evidence! So, when God warned him of the coming flood, Noah built the ark by faith. And indeed, the flood came. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Did Sarah just believe she was going to have a son? No, she actually had one; there was evidence of her faith. Every single person in the Old Testament age mentioned in Hebrews 11 experienced solid evidence of the work of God. They received the promises of God. They were not empty promises. These were men of faith. Their faith was not dead but very much alive!

If I had just sat and waited and believed that my father would give me the bike, I would have believed, but there would have been no bicycle, no evidence. I want evidence from God, the evidence of His working in my life. I want to substantiate every word the Lord has spoken to me in the Bible or in a message. What do you do after the Lord touches you in a message or in His Word? Do you go home and sleep, or do you deal with the Lord and say, “Lord, I want to experience that. I want the evidence. And I am willing to substantiate what You have spoken, what I have read in the Bible, and to mingle it with faith.” What does it mean to mingle the Word with faith? When making a dough, does a baker mix eggs, sugar, flour, milk and butter with a finger, stirring in a circle a few times? No, the ingredients are mixed and blended together with a

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machine or with hands, with some strength and patience until it is mingled just right and is ready. Do you mingle God's Word with faith until you see the evidence? Mingle the Word with faith!

At the end of this age, especially now, where we are so near to the time of His return, the Lord is not just the author, the beginning of the faith, but He is also the finisher, the perfecter of this faith! Everything needs perfection. We all need to realize that our faith must be perfected.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not believe that. They think they are okay because they are saved, their sins are forgiven, and they believe they will go to heaven. They have no sense of needing to be perfected spiritually. "*Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48). "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1:16; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). Be sanctified (Heb. 2:11); be saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25)! The Lord says that we need to leave the elementary principles of the Word of God and be perfected (Heb. 5:12-6:1). That does not mean the elementary things are wrong, but you have to go on! Paul said, "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things*" (1 Cor. 13:11). Now we are no longer playing with childish things because we are going on and maturing in life. This is a very important principle. It is the same with faith; it must be perfected.

We have all received equally precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1). It is not our faith – it is the faith of God. God has given you this faith. When you were born again, and the Holy Spirit came into your heart, He gave you this wonderful gift of faith. Faith is a very powerful characteristic of God! It belongs to God. In Genesis 1, whatever God spoke came into being: "*Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light*" (Gen. 1:3). Can you do that? Can you tell the storm to stop? Can you change the water into wine in one second? No, you cannot, but the power of God can! The Lord said, "*Have the faith of God*" (Mark 11:22 KJV). Faith is of God. God separated the waters below from the waters above and created the atmosphere by His Word (Gen. 1:7). Everything was created by His Word.

Hebrews 11:3 says, “*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.*” That is hard to believe. But is it harder to believe that the world was created by God or that it was created by a big bang? Did the beautiful park across the street just somehow come into being? Is it easier to believe that your great-grandfather was a gorilla or that you were created in the image and likeness of God? Which is more reasonable? Would you believe me if I told you that this well-designed, beautiful pen was not created by anyone but somehow came into being after one million years and a big bang? No, because that’s impossible! You would take me for a fool. Now, if I were to tell you that a monkey could begin to change himself and change his own DNA, and then after one million years, turn into a human being, would you believe that? It is more reasonable to believe Genesis 1:26: “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’*”

Faith is a very reasonable thing. If you are not reasonable, you will not have faith. Faith is of God, but it requires us to have a reasonable mind. That is why it says, “*By faith we understand*” (Heb 11:3). If you do not have a clear understanding, and sound mind, you will believe all kinds of lies. The faith given to us by God requires a sound mind. If you do not have a sound mind, you will not believe anything God says, but believe the lies people tell you. Some say, “Once you die, you will be reincarnated. If you are a good person, you might be reincarnated as a beautiful bird. So, don’t kill that bird because it may be your grandfather.” Is that reasonable? No, but many people believe it. That is not faith but stupidity. Faith requires our healthy understanding and a sound, sober, and renewed mind. Paul said, “*be renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (Eph. 4:23). Transformation requires us to have a renewed mind; this is why we should not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). Without a healthy, sound mind full of understanding, you cannot have real faith and cannot substantiate anything through faith. No wonder Paul said that the god of this age, Satan, has blinded the minds of those who do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4). If your mind is blinded, you are not sound anymore, and you cannot believe the things of God.

“*By faith we understand that the worlds [universe] were framed by the word of God*” (Heb 11:3). The word “framed” means that the universe

was designed and created with a plan. Do not believe in the theory of evolution or the big bang theory. The Word of God says very clearly that God created everything orderly and wonderfully (Isa. 45:18). God did not create tohu bohu (chaos). The world was designed to be inhabited by man. It is so wonderful, so harmonic. Every time I look at my hands, I praise God for such a wonderful Creator. With these two hands, we are able to do so many things! A gorilla cannot do those things. God is my witness concerning how many times I have told Him: “Father God, You are a wonderful Creator.” I can see, smell, think properly, and be so coordinated. For your breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you do not have to eat the same thing every day – there is so much variation. This planet is so beautiful and wonderful. Do you think nobody designed it?

We need a sober, sound, and renewed mind to mingle this faith with the Word of God. Then by faith, we will understand many things. Praise the Lord!

*Note: The above content has not been reviewed by the speaker.*