Faith

Go to any Hebrew and Greek dictionary and you will soon discover that the word for “faith” has a root meaning as “that which is stable” (n.) or “that which stabilizes” (v.). This means a follower of Jesus has faith as something (or Someone) upon which to stabilize and establish a spiritual life; it is your secure foundation upon which to build your spiritual life. This is why it is very important for you to grasp the foundational meaning of the word “faith.” (Resource: Strong’s & Thayer’s, Hebrew & Greek lexicons; Faith, Hebrew # 529, 530, 539 (awman); Greek # 4100, 4102 (pistis), 4103; root: 3982 - peitho: to bind; to convince)

Hebrews 11:1 streamlines faith’s definition as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (all references: NKJV). This definition is rich in meaning; let’s look at it. “Substance” in Greek is hupostasis (5287): hupo, meaning “under, beneath, or support,” and stasis, “[to] stand, abide, or set up.” Thus you can illustrate faith’s substance as the formation of your spiritual foundation. It is that upon which a believer builds and by which he is secured. It is also called your spiritual “rest” (Matt. 11:28, 29; Heb. 4:9, 10, 11).

Jesus teaches His followers to have faith and consistently rebukes them for having “little faith” (Luke 12:28, et al.). When He presents the formation of faith, Jesus points to Himself as the “substance”—the foundation—on which faith resides. This same word for “substance,” in Hebrews 11:1, is translated as “person” in Hebrews 1:3, referring to Jesus as the “brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (hupostasis). Jesus is the substance—the personhood—of God.

When you think of faith, do you think of the personhood of God as your sure foundation on which you rest? Do you think of Jesus as the substance of your faith? Foundations are rarely seen, but it is the evidence of something that is established and securely built upon. Please allow me to paraphrase Hebrews 11:1a: “A believer’s faith is founded in the Personhood of God, that is, Jesus Christ. He is the substance upon which a rock-solid foundation is established for the believer to build his spiritual life.”

Now if Jesus is your faith—your secure spiritual foundation— the word “hope” fits in perfectly in the Hebrews definition. “Hope” (elpidzo 1679) means “to have a strong and mighty trust” in your foundation. Plus, it is a continuous tense participle, middle passive, meaning: as you act on faith, faith acts on you. That means you become the beneficiary of your faith in your foundation. (“Hope” comes from elpis (1680), which literally means “pleasurable anticipation.”)

Hebrews completes its definition of faith with the word “evidence” (elegchos 1650). This is a legal term which means: to have convincing (or, convicting) proof. It is the kind of proof an attorney would present in a court of law that would produce a conviction. So, your mighty trust in the foundation of your faith produces the evidence that convicts you and your acts as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Jesus does not separate Himself from your faith. The building up of your spiritual life is founded upon your “hope,” that is, your strong and mighty trust in Jesus. It is your “evidence” of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). As you put your faith in Christ and He becomes your foundation, your spiritual growth is firm and secure. Think about this: Your spiritual life can be established only as great as your faith in your foundation allows. That’s why Jesus worked on building His followers’ faith and rewarded those who had “great” faith (Matt. 15:28).

Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, daughter, your faith has made you well,” and to two blind men whom He healed, “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matt. 9:22 & 29 in part). In what (or, Whom) was their faith? Faith in Jesus develops a strong trust (“hope”) between you and Him; this trust develops a maturing relationship between the two of you and establishes your faith.

So when your faith is challenged, remember that it is an attack on your foundation. Can you rest and remain secure upon your spiritual foundation? Can you trust Jesus? Always remember that your faith rests upon the Rock of your salvation. Don’t doubt His presence with you and His power to build you up. Have and exercise Faith!

For an expanded discussion on the word, “Faith,” request the book, Metamorphosis 2: The Transforming Power of Intimacy With God, by Johnnie R. Jones; © 2004; 140 pgs. ($12.00; shipping included). There’s an entire chapter that expands this definition of your faith, plus a whole lot more! To order, contact: brojohnnie@gmail.com. You may read more Word-Study Devotionals at: www.brojohnnie.blogspot.com. More to come!