

From TableTalk Magazine:

What is True Faith?

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

- [Hebrews 11:1-3](#)

We return today to our study of the biblical doctrines outlined in the Heidelberg Catechism. Having told us in question and answer 20 that salvation is granted only to those who trust in Christ ([John 3:36](#)), the catechism looks at what it means to rest in Jesus alone (Q&A 21). Understanding the nature of true faith is essential if we are to know whether or not we belong to the Savior.

The catechism looks to [Hebrews 11:1-3](#) to define faith, though the author of Hebrews gives less a formal definition of faith than a description of what it does. First, faith is an assurance of the future (v. 1). It gives an objective reality to what we know is coming, enabling us to live now as if we already possess the fullness of our inheritance in Christ. We do not yet fully experience all the blessings of the gospel; for example, we do not yet enjoy freedom from sin’s presence and the possession of our glorified bodies. Our faith, however, gives a present, objective weight to this future reality, enabling us to stand firm and obey God in the face of trial because we know all His promises will be accomplished. A.W. Pink writes, “*Faith gives the object hoped for at a future period, a present reality and power in the soul, as if already possessed; for the believer is satisfied with the security afforded, and acts under the full persuasion that God will not fail of His engagement.*”

Because faith is tied to future realities, it is tied to things not directly accessible to the five senses ([Heb. 11:1, 3](#)). It is “the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is not exercised in what we can see, hear, feel, touch, or taste but in what our senses do not presently experience. But let us be clear that this does not make faith a blind leap into the dark or something we exercise without any consideration of evidences. After all, Hebrews 11 moves on in verses 4–40 to refer to God’s work in history to illustrate true faith. Faith is not believing in things for which there is no evidence, such as pink unicorns, leprechauns, mythological gods and heroes, and so forth. Believing in such things is not faith but wishful thinking at best. Christian faith, on the other hand, is believing in things for which there is evidence. The testimony of history ([Luke 1:1-4](#)), the evidence of God and His handiwork in nature ([Rom. 1:18-32](#)), and more give us reason to believe the Lord’s promises.

Coram Deo

[First Corinthians 13:12](#) indicates that faith is a virtue that will one day pass away. In glory we will see God face to face and will no longer need to hope in what is presently unseen. Until then, however, we are called to stake our very lives on the promises of God. We must affirm the truth of His Word, not because of an irrational trust or wishful thinking but because He has kept His promises in the past and will certainly do so in the future.

RC Sproul unpacks faith here: https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/faith_the_evidence_of_things_unseen/

John Piper explains the context and application of our verses: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-faith-knows-and-hopes-for>

This is indeed temporary, for we know / hope that Christ will come again!