

# Substance and Evidence

by John Follette

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*Faith is the stand-under that supports and sustains the object of faith, and it is the Word of God that provides the evidence for our faith.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 8:23, Matthew 14:22, Romans 4:20, Romans 8:24, Galatians 5:6, Hebrews 11:1

**Topics:** "Faith And Action", "Gods Promises"

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## Description

John Follette emphasizes the essence of faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, highlighting three key aspects: the object of faith beyond natural achievement, the personal desire or motive behind faith, and the personal conviction leading to action. He clarifies that faith is not the material substance but the support that brings the object into manifestation. Using the example of Peter walking on water, he illustrates how faith in God's Word provides the evidence needed to step out in faith, emphasizing the importance of acting on God's specific promises rather than presuming based on personal desires.

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## Transcript

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

Faith makes the unseen things for which we hope, certain to the soul. Concerning faith we must always remember three things. These are true in any case when faith is to be exercised. First, the object of faith must be beyond the seizure of the senses, and beyond the field of natural or human achievement. Were it not so faith would be quite unnecessary, for sight or nature would accomplish the desired end. Natural impossibility is the atmosphere in which faith works.

Second, the unseen object of faith must be hoped for. That is, the object of faith is a personal desire or ideal or objective which calls out the heart. Here we touch the realm of motives. There is always the motive to be considered as a normal feature of faith. The will alone may not lay hold of the invisible ideal or object, the motive or heart yearning must be there also. Gal. 5:6. "Faith which worketh by love." Here we find the motive of faith that really accomplishes things for God.

Third, there must be the personal conviction which leads to the venture or move on the part of the individual. He is convinced that the object is not a vagary, but an object as real as any object seen.

I want to consider two words which have sometimes caused confusion and made faith a bugbear when it should be the normal breath of a Christian. We say the substance of this book I hold is paper, ink, thread, etc. In other words the substance of the book is the book itself--its very material evidence. Yes, that is what we mean by the use of the word substance. But that is not the meaning of the word as used here in the text. The word used is in Greek, hupostasis. It is made of two words: hupo -- under, and histemi--stand. It is that which stands under. It is not the object hoped for, but that which stands under and supports that object in bringing it into material manifestation. If it were the object, we would need no faith, for we would have the desire. "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24). Faith cannot mean the material substance, for that would be a contradiction and utter foolishness.

Faith is like my arm which reaches out and supports or stands under the book or object I am bringing down from the shelf. My arm is not the substance or object, it is the stand-under which supports the object in bringing it down. Here is a definition of faith by Vaughn which I like very much because it gives us the true conception or meaning of the word.

"Faith is that principle, hat exercise of mind and soul, which has for its object things not seen but hoped for, and instead of sinking under them as too wonderous, whether from their difficulty or from their uncertainty, stands firm under them--supports and sustains their pressure---in other words, is assured of, confides in and relies on them."

This should be a word of comfort and encouragement to those who are trying to fool themselves into believing they have the object of their faith when they have only faith. I have seen many of God's children struggling to make themselves believe what God does not ask nor faith demand. They think that if they had faith they would have the very object and material substance of the thing. You cannot have both. Faith first, and that brings you the material substance. They think they have no faith and so go down in a bog of unbelief and doubt and fear. God does not want you to say you have the material thing when you haven't. He does like us to declare our faith and say we have hupostasis or the stand-under which brings the object to materialization. So do not try any more to make faith mean something which it does not, but know that all God wants of us is to exercise our hupostasis which is bringing to pass the things hoped for. We stand and praise God while hupostasis brings the things to pass. Faith is not a struggle, it is a rest and a support--it stands under.

I like to think of Abraham. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief but was strong in faith,giving glory to God." (Rom. 4:20). The word staggered is what unbelief and fear make ,as do--we stagger. But faith, hupostasis, supports and holds the conditions up for us. Why didn't he stagger? Because he had faith--not the material thing as yet. That is what we mean when we say, "We have it by faith." I know this term is abused and is often made an excuse for unbelief. However, there is a Truth in it. They mean that faith is operative and though the material manifestation is not yet seen, the thing is moving on to it's material accomplishment. So it is as good as done and we can call those things which be not as though they were. Faith is like a check to be cashed at a bank where the actual money is. The check is not the actual currency or gold, but it is equal to it and stands under until you get the money in your hand. Then the check is not needed--the money is ail one needs.

Now let us consider the word "evidence." The R. V. (Margin) puts it, the proving or testing. Many seem to think because faith has to do with the unseen and immaterial things of life that there is no such thing as evidence in the matter. They think faith has to do with some uncertain element in the universe. Here is where they are mistaken. The very foundation upon which the assurance and conviction rest is the Word

of God. When we have faith, we take God at His word and believe what He says. Faith is not belief without evidence. It is belief on the very best and surest of evidence, the Word of God, who cannot lie.

As an illustration of having faith in His Word, let us consider Peter walking upon the water. In Matt. 14: 22-33 we have the record. "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him." v. 22. They are in divine order and acting in obedience. However, a storm comes upon them. Trouble or opposition may not truly indicate one is out of order, backslidden or in disobedience. Very often we find a severe test may prove one is in divine order for the sake of discipline, development of faith and spiritual culture.

Verse 27. When Jesus finds them in trouble, He does not rebuke them, but gives them a word of cheer and comfort.

Verse 28. Note the reaction on the part of Peter, "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

This is so artless, unstudied, spontaneous and refreshing--just like Peter. This venturesome spirit seemed to please the Master. He does not say: "Why Peter, what good would that do?" He sees more than Peter's desire to be near Him. He sees an occasion to prove faith and develop Peter.

In verse 29 we have evidence needed. The word Come, spoken by Jesus is the key to the situation.

"And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water."--Upon what did Peter walk? All will say, "Upon the water." Yes, true as far as the physical was concerned. But more. He walked upon "Come." That word from Jesus was all he needed. He in faith laid hold of "Come," and he had all the divine evidence needed. He was safe and could dare to boldly venture out upon the water. He was walking upon the eternal Word--nothing could be safer.

In verse 30 we find the effect of recognizing natural conditions in the realm of the spiritual and region of faith. Fear enters and disorganizes the whole scene--Peter begins to sink.

In verse 31 note the exquisite grace and tact of Jesus in dealing with Peter, "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand." Help comes first, the rebuke later. As He holds Peter, He rebukes him. The safe place for a rebuke is in the arms of the Lord. He can hold while He rebukes or corrects. I think were it not so, some of us might run away from Him in greater fear.

In verse 33, note the results of this incident. Peter actually walked on the water (a miracle for Peter) and he learned a lesson in faith. And the Lord received worship. Many might think this an unwise and uncalled-for display, but when two beautiful features are forthcoming I am glad Peter ventured.

Now a word as to evidence again. The evidence remember, is His Word. But this does not mean we have a right to pick here and there the promises which suit our desire and try thus to make faith bring things to pass. Note that Peter did not venture until he had the word from the Lord --"Come." He did not just venture out, thinking because Jesus was there all would be well. He got His word first.

In Matt. 8:23 we have the story of another storm and the disciples in a boat. But there is a difference. "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him." I wonder sometimes if we do not venture into realms or enter into conditions for which we have no spiritual capacity or equipment and often find the situation too great in its demands for our limited faith and experience. Let us tread softly--not fearfully, not

in a spirit of presumption and credulity rather than faith (based on His word).

Many Christians are upset in their faith because they venture out upon a word or promise from the Bible thinking they have a right to risk all upon it--when in truth the verse of promise may have no application to the situation at all. And because God does not answer they are thrown into confusion and doubt. Many times the human heart is governed by motives and desires not in line with God's purpose or plan and so one needs to be careful to let Him search the heart in this regard.

One may be moved by personal desires, a set of spirit, a desire to defend God's glory, or maintain His honor, and be so determined to have what he may call victory that he battles in faith until exhausted. But that does not mean God has guaranteed or is bound by any oath to answer the prayer. The human heart is subtle and deceitful, and the motives prompting prayer should be suggested by the Spirit, born of God, and then faith can and does lay hold to victory.

Do not venture upon the water without a divine "Come" under your feet. (Do not get into bondage now and not venture at all!) But do please His heart by listening to His word to you and then act upon it. There are plenty of His words for us to venture upon and as we do so we grow in faith and please His heart.

These are testing days and an age of mechanical, industrial, and material encroachment, yet we look not at the things seen but away unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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