

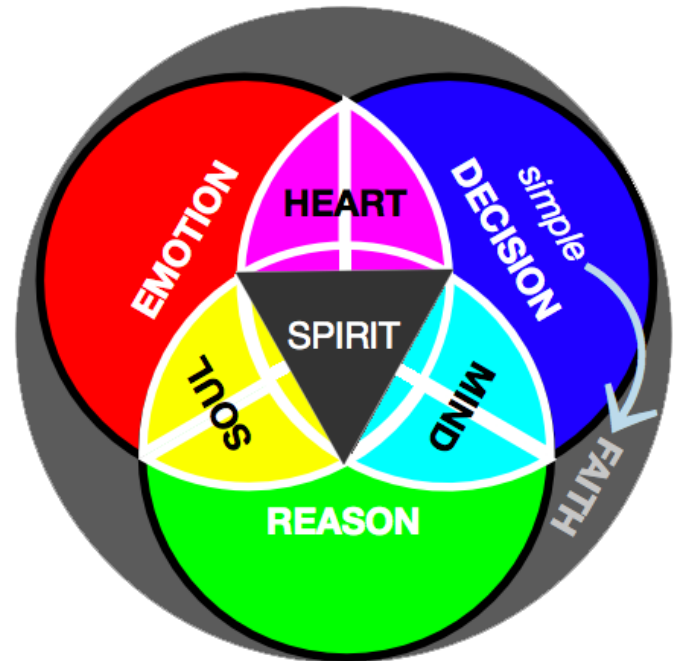
# B.02

## From Simplicity to Faith

In Which Unseen Faith Transforms the Visible World

Faith is the primary virtue of the Mind. It enables us to base Decisions on Reasons, as well as to deduce Reasons from Decisions (axioms). It can be defined as “the ability to believe what is true — even when difficult.”

Faith is particularly needed by the Simple, who otherwise would only trust what they can touch and feel. Yet God’s invisible wisdom is in reality more powerful than all the armies of flesh and blood which rail against it. And thus pursuing that wisdom, in faith, is actually the most practical decision of all...



### Assigned Reading:

Peter Kreeft: *Back to Virtue*

5.A (Faith) The Three Theological Virtues

Dick Hockett: *Foundations of Wisdom*

4. The Simple

## **Admonition: Proverbs 8**

### **Why do the Simple Need Wisdom?**

- 1 Does not wisdom cry out,  
And understanding lift up her voice?
- 2 She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,  
Beside the way, where the paths meet.
- 3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,  
At the entrance of the doors:
- 4 “To you, O men, I call,  
And my voice is to the sons of men.
- 5 O you simple ones, understand prudence,  
And you fools, be of an understanding heart.
- 6 Listen, for I will speak of excellent things,  
And from the opening of my lips will come right things;
- 7 For my mouth will speak truth;  
Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are with righteousness;  
Nothing crooked or perverse is in them.
- 9 They are all plain to him who understands,  
And right to those who find knowledge.
- 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver,  
And knowledge rather than choice gold;
- 11 For wisdom is better than rubies,  
And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.
- 12 “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,  
And find out knowledge and discretion.
- 13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;  
Pride and arrogance and the evil way  
And the perverse mouth I hate.
- 14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom;  
I am understanding, I have strength.
- 15 By me kings reign,  
And rulers decree justice.
- 16 By me princes rule, and nobles,  
All the judges of the earth.[a]
- 17 I love those who love me,  
And those who seek me diligently will find me.
- 18 Riches and honor are with me,  
Enduring riches and righteousness.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold,  
And my revenue than choice silver.
- 20 I traverse the way of righteousness,  
In the midst of the paths of justice,

- 21 That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth,  
That I may fill their treasuries.
- 22 “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,  
Before His works of old.
- 23 I have been established from everlasting,  
From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.
- 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
When there were no fountains abounding with water.
- 25 Before the mountains were settled,  
Before the hills, I was brought forth;
- 26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields,  
Or the primal dust of the world.
- 27 When He prepared the heavens, I was there,  
When He drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 When He established the clouds above,  
When He strengthened the fountains of the deep,
- 29 When He assigned to the sea its limit,  
So that the waters would not transgress His command,  
When He marked out the foundations of the earth,
- 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman;[b]  
And I was daily His delight,  
Rejoicing always before Him,
- 31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world,  
And my delight was with the sons of men.
- 32 “Now therefore, listen to me, my children,  
For blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Hear instruction and be wise,  
And do not disdain it.
- 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me,  
Watching daily at my gates,  
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
- 35 For whoever finds me finds life,  
And obtains favor from the LORD;
- 36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;  
All those who hate me love death.”

## **Bible: Hebrews 11**

- 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.
- 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.
- 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice

than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”;[a] for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child[b] when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them,[c] embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, “In

Isaac your seed shall be called,”[d] 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in[e] Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted,[f] were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted,

*tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

*39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

This famous chapter begins with a simple yet profound definition of faith [C.1]:

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Faith is how we appropriate truths we cannot see. It doesn't take much faith to believe that the sky is blue or that a chair has four legs, since those facts are readily apparent. On the other hand, it requires faith in science to believe that the sky is blue due to the way invisible particles called "atoms" reflect light from the sun. For that matter, trusting that a particular chair is strong enough to support your weight is also act of faith — especially after Thanksgiving dinner!

Importantly, faith is not a mere intellectual belief, but the basis for making wise decisions [C.2]:

*For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.*

The reason this matters is that the most important things in the universe are not immediately obvious, and thus require faith:

*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

This can be read as describing either scientific or spiritual truth, both of which:

- flow from God's character (name)
- are generally not visible to our naked senses
- together uphold the world we live in

The secular spirit of the Enlightenment tried to

divorce Faith from Reason by presenting them as independent and opposing forces, but in reality — when used wisely — they each depend on the other, and we need both (along with humility) to fully explore and understand God's plan [C.3]:

*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

The word "witness" here is the same as "testimony" above, and is actually the root of our word "martyr." However, it could also be translated as "evidence": our faith is not based merely on tradition or authority (though those have their place), but on the evidence of those who have gone before us and triumphed over death itself [C.4]:

*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

In particular, our spiritual ancestors provide evidence of what kind of faith is necessary to please God — i.e., live according to His purpose for us. Specifically:

*But without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

This is in fact a general principle: to apprehend any truth requires first believing that it a) exists, and b) is worth seeking. If you don't believe there is such a thing as happiness, true love, or a good cup of coffee you will never make the effort to find any of them. That is why, somewhat paradoxically, we need to have faith that God exists before He can reveal Himself to us.

However, that does not mean that faith is groping blindly in the dark. Rather, we can follow the well-lit trail of those who preceded us:

*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving*

*of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

Though love ultimately ends by casting out fear (cf. I John 4:18), faith starts with holy fear — the same fear that is the beginning of wisdom: the awareness that God punishes those who scorn Him as surely as He rewards those who seek Him.

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.*

Faith is particularly important for us as foreigners in this world, for God wants us to share in conceiving...

*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born [as many] as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

...a place we have never been nor seen, which is nonetheless our true home:

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that [country] from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.*

The Simple desire to preserve the comfortable world they know — or at least imagine they remember; but the Wise seek by faith a place that never was, yet God has prepared for us:

*But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly [country]. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Though getting there requires letting go of what is most precious to us in this life:

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten [son], of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God [was] able to raise [him] up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

As well as passing that faith down to others:

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, [leaning] on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. [C.5]*

This is seen most dramatically in the life of Moses, who was born in faith:

*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw [he] [was] a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.*

And later chose to appropriate that faith for Himself — at great cost:

*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*

Which in turn led to deliverance and victory for the Israelites:

*By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*

*By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry [land], [whereas] the Egyptians, attempting [to do] so, were drowned.*

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.*

And even to Gentiles (like us) who believe:

*By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.*

Which is just scratching the surface of those who turned their worlds upside down (or rather, right-side up):

*And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also [of] David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked 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, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.*

Though not every story ends quite so happily [C.6]:

*Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, 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 mountains, [in] dens and caves of the earth.*

It is a wonderful thing to have a conquering faith that brings victory in this life, but even more glorious to have an enduring faith that continues even beyond death:

*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made*

*perfect apart from us.*

The sobering truth is that the blessings we enjoy today are built upon the faith of countless souls who suffered and died without seeing the fruits of their labors.

What legacy of faith do we need to leave to those who come after us?

## Conversation

1. What are some of your favorite descriptions or illustrations of faith?
2. Share about a leap of faith that changed the course of your life.
3. Do you ever see conflict between “faith” and “reason”? Why or why not?
4. What evidence have you witnessed that gives you a reason for faith?
5. Describe some of the people who passed their faith down to you.
6. When has walking in faith caused you or those you love to suffer?

## Decision

- Repentance: What might be the “Isaac” God is calling you to sacrifice in order to receive a deeper faith?
- Action: Where can you seek God more diligently, in faith that He’ll reward you?
- Worship: Thank God for the “heavenly country” He has prepared for you.

## Explore More

<http://2transform.us/2009/01/07/lead-b2-from-simplicity-to-faith/>

## For Next Week

For next week, read Romans 5. Why does hope not disappoint, even amidst suffering?