

Hope or Faith? Heb. 10:23

By Steve Combs

We this challenge regarding Hebrews 10:23, “Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” - “The KJV says ‘the profession of our faith,’ but the TR says ‘Elpis,’ which is translated as hope in every other place in the KJV (over 50 places). Here is another example where the KJV and the TR simply do not match. It poses no theological or hermeneutic problems, but they are not the same. Without consulting the Greek, a translator would never pick this up from the context.”

There is only one possible conclusion to the statement: “Here is another example where the KJV and the TR simply do not match.” The King James Bible has an incorrect translation here. It has an error in the translation of *elpis* as *faith* rather than *hope*. Is this true?

Hope is faith. The two words are synonymous. Faith focuses on the object of faith. Hope focuses on the expectation of faith, the reward expected (Heb. 11:6). Hope for a Christian is confident trust in the reward. Faith is an important and inseparable element of a Christian’s hope.

1. Lexicons, include the following definitions:

A. Mounce: expectation; hope, Act_24:15; Rom_5:4; meton. the object of hope, thing hoped for, Rom_8:24; Gal_5:5; the author or source of hope, Col_1:27; 1Ti_1:1; **trust, confidence**, 1Pe_1:21; ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι, in security, with a guarantee, Act_2:26; Rom_8:20.

B. Complete Word Study, Zodhiates: Of a hope in or on someone, i.e., **trust, confidence**

C. Samuel Loveland, 1828 Lexicon: hope, the object or author of hope; **confidence**, security.

D. John Parkhurst, 1829 Lexicon: Trust, confidence joined with hope; **confidence**, security.

E. John Pickering, 1832 Lexicon: Hope, expectation; beyond expectation; **trust**, fear (his study includes the Greek classics)

F. James Donegan, 1833 Lexicon: Hope, dread, expectation, **reliance**.

G. J. A. Giles, 1840 Lexicon: hope, **confidence, reliance**

H. Greeville Ewing, 1827 Lexicon: Hope, **trust, confidence**, security, expectation

Hope is like many words with one or more primary definitions and many minor definitions.

How much of a Greek scholar does one have to become to translate? Pickering studied the Greek classics to come up with definitions. The KJV translators already did the Greek scholarly studies. Greek knowledge had come from the Greeks. In fact, it had not been that long since knowledge of Greek was brought to Europe by the Greeks themselves (fleeing from Moslem invasion in the east). These immigrants taught Greek to the Western Europeans. I would rather trust the knowledge of Greek the KJV translators had than any of the modern teachers or books I have had.

2. The Bible: Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith** is the substance of things **hoped** for, the evidence of things **not seen**.

Romans 8:24 “For we are saved by hope ...” Really? I thought we are saved by faith. Galatians 3:26, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith ...” We are saved by hope, but hope is faith.

3. English Dictionaries:

A. Merriam-Webster: Archaic: **Trust**

B. Webster 1828: v.t. To place confidence in; to **trust** in with confident expectation of good.
noun. Confidence in a future event.

If the translators rendered *elpis* as faith in a single instance out of over 50 uses, then they knew full well the meaning of *elpis* and they must have had good reason to translate it differently in this verse. Here is my perspective on this.

Many Greek words are flexible in their usage, as you know. The principle of **polysemy** teaches that words have **multiple meanings**. The verb form of the noun, *elpis*, is *elpizo*. It was translated “trust,” “trusteth,” or “trusted” 18 times out of 32. Mounce defines *elpizo* as 1) to hope, expect and 2) to repose hope and confidence in, trust, confide. *Trust is faith*. In its definition, the Word Study Dictionary uses these words to define *elpizo*: to hope, expect with desire, to trust in, and confide in.

Elpis, then, is defined as 1) Hope, desire some good with expectation of obtaining it; 2) trust and confidence; 3) expectation and hope; 4) anticipation with pleasure, expectation or confidence. According to Webster, the English word, hope, means to trust in with confident expectation of good. All of this includes a strong element of faith, because trust, expectation, and confidence are faith.

In addition, Romans 8:24 is a cross reference to Ephesians 2:8. Rom. 8:24 says, “For we are saved by hope” and Eph. 2:8 says, “For we are saved through faith.” Hope and faith are synonymous, depending on the context. Rom. 8:24 further states, “but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” To confidently hope for what you cannot see is the definition of faith. “Now faith is the substance of things *hoped for*, the evidence of things *not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). There is an unbreakable connection between the nature of faith and the nature of hope. Faith is hope and hope is part of faith; faith is the assurance of the hope.

Then there is the context of Heb. 10:23. Verse 22 says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” The word faith is *pistis* in verse 22 and is connected with the *elpis* of verse 23, which is followed up later in verse 23 with, “for he is faithful (*pistos*) that promised.” The subject under discussion is faith, not merely hope. “Let us draw near with a true heart of faith ... Let us hold fast the profession of our faith ...; (for he is faithful that promised).”