

The Activities of Faith

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I invite you to open the Scriptures to Hebrews, chapter 11. I didn't intend to start off this week about missions, or about giving, as our last couple of weeks have been leading up to this mission-giving commitment Sunday. I was intending to go back to the book of Matthew, as I have learned so much there and am excited to share with you. But this passage has been in my mind and in my heart and has been ministering to me and challenging me, and I felt so much it is the kind of thing that we all need, so I am going to go to it this Lord's day. Hebrews Chapter 11...and even as I was thinking about it, though, I did come to think there is an application regarding financial sacrifice for the cause of Christ; and, you see it in the chapter right before this in Hebrews Chapter 10. Look at it for a minute. Remember that the book of Hebrews was written to primarily Jewish Christians, but it is written to believers to encourage them to be bold in their commitment to Jesus Christ and not to pull back from that in facing a lot of pressure, even persecution in some ways from the unbelieving Jews, the ones who rejected Jesus; and they were facing all kinds of temptations in the world to turn away from Christ, and go after sin in various forms. He's writing this to encourage them to persevere in their faith, of course, and here is what he says to them in verse 32 of Chapter 10:

"I want you to recall, to remember those former days, the early days of your faith when after you were enlightened, you endured hard struggles with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated, for you had compassion with those who were in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property."

Think about that for a minute. Have you ever joyfully accepted the plundering of your property for the sake of Christ? He tells them to remember when they were first saved how they joyfully accepted even the plundering of their property since they knew that they had a better possession, and an abiding one. Now granted, we're not having our property plundered by force, but rather, we're being called on to give of our material possessions willingly for the cause of the Gospel. That is something that is supernatural just as much as these people who were joyful when their possessions were plundered. Are you willing to joyfully "plunder" your bank account for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ around the world? What would make someone willing to leave one of the freest and richest countries of the world to go live somewhere else for the cause of Jesus Christ? What would cause people to give, to spend and to be spent for this mission? The answer, in a word, is faith. And he alludes to it here in Chapter 10, but he really enlarges on it in Chapter 11, and that will be our focus today.

The Bible says, "the just shall live by faith." Without faith, it is "impossible to please God." Chapter 10, verse 38 says, "My righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." But then, he says that he's confident, he's assured, he's hopeful that those he's writing to are not those who will shrink back, and be destroyed, but those who have faith, and preserve their souls. He is writing to people who are in danger, as every professing Christian is, in danger of abandoning his

faith, even while he's hopeful that's not the case for the people he's writing to. Nevertheless, though he is hopeful, though he believes that they are truly the Lord's, he is warning them of the possibility of the tempter coming in and getting ahold of someone who is deceived, who is merely a confessor, and his unbelief become apparent, and becomes manifest. And throughout the book of Hebrews, he's warning us against that, that we would persevere in faith. If you are justified, you live by faith. And if you don't live by faith, that becomes an evidence that you may not be justified, and so, we need be careful about that. What he's saying here is a warning to all of us. Not to rest presumptuously, but to rest truly in Jesus Christ. He is warning that a lack of faith can be manifest even in the lives of people who claim they belong to the Lord.

Their lack of faith is manifested in one of two ways: one, through a bitterness against the Lord. In Hebrews Chapter 12, he talks of a "root of bitterness." His fear was that a root of bitterness may cause some of them to "fail to obtain the grace of God" and by that, they would not see the Lord. And the elusion here is to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 29, which says that the Lord brought His people out of Egypt and into the wilderness, and Moses was speaking to that generation of Israelites about the failure of faith of many of their forefathers who proved not to be true believers, they failed to enter the land of rest, which for us, is a picture of our eternal rest. They failed to enter into the land of rest, they were tempted and tested in the wilderness, and for some of them a root of unbelief took hold that grew into bitterness--of bitter fruit against God. And we have all probably known people who have grown bitter against God—you have known people who claimed to be a Christian, and at some point, God let something happen in their lives, and they just decided they could "not believe in a God like that anymore" and turned their back against Him. He is warning the Hebrews, "guard your heart that you would not become an unbeliever." He is telling them to keep believing in Christ despite all the persecution and the pressure that God is allowing in their lives—not to let that turn them away from Jesus. And I would say the same to you today: don't let your afflictions cause you to become embittered against God and manifest a heart of unbelief. Keep believing in the Lord.

There is a second way that unbelief is manifested throughout the book of Hebrews, and that is, not through bitterness, but through apathy—particularly apathy regarding temptation and sin. He is warning these people that they should never come to a place where they don't care about their sin anymore, saying, "It's just who I am, it's the way I am going to be, the way I'm going to live." In Chapter 3, the author warns them against "becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and manifesting an evil heart of unbelief." It's not that he is saying you must stop sinning in order to be justified so God will let you into heaven. He's saying your apathy about sin is a manifestation of an unbelieving heart, and that's what's going to keep you from heaven. We are always and only justified by faith, but that faith is manifest in a constant fight against sin. So, don't ever grow apathetic. So, those are the ways unbelief can be manifest: bitterness at the sufferings we face, or apathy to our sin. And the result in either case is that these people are in danger of leaving the believing Christian community and going back to their unbelieving old life, in their case, an unbelieving Jewish community from which they were saved. And his word to them was, "brothers and sisters persevere in faith, keep believing, keep your eyes on Jesus, keep holding on to His promises, keep believing what he says."

And Hebrews 11 comes in at this point and helps us understand what that faith is, what faith looks like, what it looks like in real life, how faith works, and how we can cultivate it. And so, for good reason, this has been called the "faith chapter, or the hall of Christian faith." And we are going to read it together:

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ 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.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven

days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated - ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy - wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

This chapter begins with a description of faith, as you can see in the very first verse: “faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.” So, we see in this description that faith manifests itself in two spheres, or in two areas: in the future, and in that which is not visible to human eyes. It reveals itself in the realm where God’s promises are not yet fulfilled, and in the field where the divinely revealed realities are unable to be seen with human eyes. Faith holds on to realities which are still future to us in our experience. We can’t yet see it. So, Paul says in Romans 8:24, that “hope that is seen is no hope at all. For who hopes for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with (endurance, with perseverance), with patience.” That’s what faith does. Waiting to see is the way that faith is put to the test. Faith is put to the test when we wait on God.

We say to ourselves, “How long do I have to wait? When will my faith be made sight?” And sometimes God deals with us like He did with Abraham and His only son Isaac, and the knife is lifted, ready to plunge, before God says, “Stop.” Faith is tested to prove that we have really trusted Him. Remember, Abraham already expressed his faith when his son asked him where that sacrifice was, saying, “God will provide” And when the time came, what happened? The Bible literally says that when Abraham was ready to plunge the knife, God stopped him. It says, “And Abraham looked, and behold, there was the sacrifice.” He sees. But he lives for awhile believing what he can’t see yet. That’s what it means when it says he did it by faith.

Sometimes, though, that means that we wait all our earthly lives for the ultimate fulfillment of all of God’s promises. You see it in the text, it is very clear, in verse 13: “These all died in faith.” They lived by faith all their lives, till death, by faith, believing in God’s promises. Similarly, verse 39 says, “though they were commended by their faith, they never received its promise.” The promise was awaiting its real fulfillment in Christ, and they lived before Christ. So, they were waiting for these promises but they never waived until death, and that is why they are held up as examples of faith. Faith holds on to divinely revealed realities which now seem far off and very intangible. And faith lives on the basis of those realities, it lives by every word from God. If that’s all faith has is the bare word of God, faith lives by that rather than by what it can see; and it perseveres, even to death, holding on to God.

Hebrews 11 unfolds and unpacks so beautifully what faith looks like in a Christian’s everyday experience, and he goes through a lot of different experiences. Isn’t that interesting? Christians manifest their faith in their own specific circumstances. I must act on my faith and live in a way that is consistent with my

faith, and for me it means doing this, and not doing that. For you it's going to look a little different, just as there are so many different responses that flow from faith in Hebrews 11. But what is common to all Believers are 5 threads I want you to see in this passage—5 commonalities, or common threads that show us how faith operates, FIVE BASIC ACTIVITIES OF FAITH.

- 1) Number one is that faith thinks. It thinks in a particular way. Faith thinks. You see that in several places, but particularly I want to draw your attention to verses 15 and 16. The author of Hebrews says, "If they (talking about the Patriarchs) had been thinking about that land from which they had gone out (that is, the land of Ur), they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is, they desired a better country." That is, the land that God had promised them. Faith thinks, and sometimes it doesn't think. See what it said? It said they didn't think about the old land, they did think, and they set their desire on the new. Faith intentionally thinks a certain way. This is so huge—this is so much a part of the Christian life. When it says that they did not think on their home land, the word means to remember it, or to call it to mind—not saying that they somehow forgot--that magically their memory was erased-- their old life. But they didn't set their mind on it, they didn't intentionally go back and replay all the wonders of that old land; instead, their minds were set on the land of promise. They might have had opportunity to think about what they left behind, they might have opportunity to think about their family that they left behind (Abraham) and all his kin. We are so mobile today; we all live in Houston and we are all from somewhere else. But for most of the history of the world, people lived where they always lived, and had uncles, aunts, grandparents, and nephews and cousins, and all they had known as their culture. Abraham left all that, and rather than thinking about all that, he set his mind on what God had promised. Even his own father had come partway with him and then stopped.

And Abraham pressed on to the land to which God had instructed him to go to. He could have had opportunity to think about the job he left, the occupation he had, his status in society, his home, property, and opportunities he had back in the land of his birth. But rather, he believed the promise of God, which was later echoed by Jesus, Himself, when He said that if you have left houses or land, or father and mother, or any of these things, you will gain more. And you just believe that. He set his mind on (he intentionally chose to think about) the promises of God. Somebody told me a long time ago that one of the things Christians need to do is to take the truth that they know and rehearse it in their minds. That is exactly the way that our faith is strengthened and our lives transformed: we take the things of truth that we know from the Bible and to continue to replay that truth, to focus on it, to intentionally set our minds on that truth, and choose to think on it, about what is right. Scripture tells us "whatever things are true...think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Everyone of us engages in a sort of an internal inner dialog with ourselves as we process our way through our days, and we are thinking about the world outside of us. But inside our minds... It's the "inside our minds" part that is so critical and so crucial. Rather than letting the circumstances of the world dictate how we think, people of faith choose how we will think and then make our choices in the world based on what God has revealed. Martin Lloyd-Jones, London preacher of years ago said it this way:

Faith ... is primarily thinking; and the whole trouble with a man of little faith is that he does not think. He allows circumstances to bludgeon him. That is the real difficulty in life. Life comes to us with a club in its hand and strikes us upon the head, and we become incapable of thought, helpless and defeated. The way to avoid that ... is to think ...The Bible is full of logic, and we must never think of faith as something purely mystical. We do not just sit down in an

armchair and expect marvelous things to happen to us. That is not Christian faith. Christian faith is essentially thinking. (He refers to Jesus' assurances in Matthew 6 and says) Look at the birds, think about them, and draw your deductions. Look at the grass, look at the lilies of the field, consider them. The trouble with most people, however, is that they will not think. Instead of doing this, they sit down and ask, what is going to happen to me? What can I do? That is the absence of thought; it is surrender; it is defeat. Our Lord, here, is urging us to think, and to think in a Christian manner.

That is the very essence of faith. Faith, if you like, can be defined like this: It is a man insisting upon thinking when everything seems determined to bludgeon and knock him down in an intellectual sense. The trouble with the person of little faith is that, instead of controlling his own thought, his thought is being controlled by something else, and, as we put it, he goes around and around in circles. That is the essence of worry.... That is not thought; that is the absence of thought, a failure to think.

What the writer of Hebrews says is that the faith of these people was manifested in that they chose to set their mind on God's word. They could have had opportunities to think in other ways. And just like them, we all face opportunities all day long, every day, to fall back into a kind of thinking that is not robustly Biblical. And what he is saying is that faith recognizes that, repents of that, and lays hold again on God's revelation and sets it before their faces, and they think that way. Faith thinks.

- 2) We see in this text that faith evaluates in unexpected ways. Faith evaluates. In other words, faith is not blind to reality, as some people think of faith. In their lives, everything can be going badly, and he or she is just oblivious. Is that a person of faith? No, that is not Bible faith. Faith is not being oblivious to reality. Faith is carefully calculating. Faith evaluates things. Faith counts the cost. Faith adds up the pluses and the minuses. Faith is not foolishness. And you see that all throughout this text, that people are evaluating. People are carefully evaluating, but their evaluations are taking into account that which most people do not take into account. And that's why they come to a different conclusion on the bottom line than most people out there in the world. In verse 11 you see an example of this: "By faith, Sarah, herself received power to conceive when she was past age since she considered (that's the key word) Him who had promised, to be faithful. She considered her circumstances and she considered God. She considered, adding up her deficits on one side, and her positives on the other side—she did that.

Now look at verse 17. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tested offered up Isaac, he who had received the promises was in the act of offering his only son, of whom it was said that through Isaac shall your offspring be named, he considered that God was even able to raise him from the dead, which figuratively speaking, He did."

Or look at verse 24. "By faith, Moses, when he was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." This is a clear accounting. He considered the reproach of Christ to be greater than the treasures of Egypt. There you have it again, people of faith considering, calculating, evaluating their lives. And for the word translated "consider" here, one of the major uses of that term comes from the field of accounting. Some of you are accountants or you have done some accounting (private totaling of your checkbook, figuring out

your assets and liabilities and tried to make ends meet). We've all made calculations and worked out ledgers and added up figures. Ten times this word is translated "to count, to consider as to count, to total up." It is a decision based on an examination of all the facts and the calculations. We say about someone, "he made a calculated decision." That is exactly what the author of Hebrews is saying these people did. Faith is not just going the opposite way of what makes sense. Don't think that is faith. Faith is looking at what makes sense and doing it. But it is looking at what makes sense with ALL the data that God has revealed. And that is what makes their calculations unique. For example, think about Moses. He says Moses, here, "considered," on the one hand, the great wealth of the palace of Egypt, and on the other hand, the reproach of Jesus Christ-- but he saw it wasn't just wealth and reproach, he saw it was the wealth of a temporary human sinful, anti-God power, and the reproach of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the one who was worthy of every amount of honor and glory and blessing that he could possibly receive; the one who controlled everything in the palm of His hands. Moses looked at the pleasures of the king's palace as something that was fleeting, just for a moment, and the glories of Jesus Christ as something that was far weightier than that. In other words, he had eyes to see parts of that data that other people didn't consider, and when he looked at that, the decision was clear. What fool would give up greater glory to get something that was only temporary? Don't look at Moses and say, "wow, he really went against all intuition." No, he did what made sense. But what made sense through eyes of faith. And that is exactly what you and I ought to do. I'm telling you, don't live your life as a fool, live it as a person who is wise. Behind Moses' choosing, in verse 25, notice his choice there—behind his choosing was his considering in verse 26. And behind every choice that you will ever make is right thinking. And by the way, behind every wrong choice that we ever make is a pattern of wrong thinking that is usually not intentionally chosen, but a wrong pattern of thinking that we slip back into because we are not being intentional in calculating things according to what God has revealed.

Or consider Sarah, she's calculating. She's totaling up the assets and the liabilities on the one hand. She's got an older body, past her childbearing years; it is very probable, likely impossible that she can have a child (liabilities); but on the other side, she considers that God is able to do anything (plusses). And by the way, her faith wasn't perfect, was it? She stumbled a little there at the beginning, but God in His mercy, brings us even through those stumbles to confess a real faith in Christ, and according to the New Testament, that is where she ended up.

Or consider Abraham. He is not just foolishly choosing; he is carefully evaluating (regarding Isaac). On the one hand is his only son who he loves, and he is about to lose him; and exacerbating the negatives, he also knows Isaac is the promised son, so now all the promises of God are on the line. So, what does he do? How does he make this choice to go ahead and go through with it? He chose to make a mental calculation—we are told about this. What is going on in his brain? What is he thinking about as he is going through with this? We don't know everything that was going on in his mind, but we know he started thinking things like this: "Well, I don't know what God is going to do, I don't understand this, but I know that God is even able to raise people from the dead if He wants to, so if it comes to that, I just know He is going to be faithful, as He is always faithful to His promises, He is the God of the heavens, the God of all the universe. If I have Him on my positives, everything else on my negatives is nothing in comparison." That is what he is doing, he is going through the list, and that is exactly what you and I ought to go through, those kinds of calculations. We can see these people's internal dialog; they are weighing their options. We all make calculations in life. Jesus said those who go to war calculate to make sure they are going to have enough strength. The one who builds a

tower checks his figures and decides whether he will have enough to finish the project. When you go and get \$50 you want to spend on something, you calculate to decide whether a new pair of shoes or a nice meal out is more important to you, and you weigh the pros and cons and the needs of all that—we all go through such calculations all the time, and what he is saying is that we need to learn to make those evaluations out of a belief in what God said, because what God says is true. That will sometimes make our decisions sometime seem foolish, but in reality, to those who see, they are not foolish at all, they are the smartest thing to do. Like a banker compares his assets, sometimes things are not what they appear to be on the surface. We all remember very clearly not too many years ago the big housing bubble that burst and threatened to destroy the American economy and that of the rest of the world and took down some major banks along with it. All because people thought that certain products were worth more than they really were.

And when you really evaluate things, sometimes they are not worth what we think they are, or sometimes it is the exact opposite. Sometimes things are much more valuable than we ever knew. For example we have seen snippets of the show, Antiques Road Show, where people had something in their attic collecting dust, or they bought at a garage sale for \$20 and they take it in, and find out it's worth \$2700 or something, and they are surprised, thinking it had just been sitting in the attic collecting dust. And that is true for us, there are things that people tend to value beyond true worth, and things they tend to undervalue and under appreciate compared to their true worth. And what the writer of Hebrews is saying is that these people evaluated their choices based on what God had said. Moses recognized that the treasures of Egypt were nothing in comparison with the reproach of Christ. Like a financial analyst who digs a little bit deeper, he came to a decision, a wise decision based on a unique calculation that brings every part of the data into the decision. When a person makes a bad business deal, it is usually because he is valuing something improperly. They are evaluating the costs of the goods, or some part of the transaction in a way that is faulty.

The same thing happens when we sin. It is because we are not recognizing God's inherent value, we are valuing something more than Him, we are looking to a relationship—we are looking to a relationship, or to a possession, or an attainment or an experience to do for us what only God can do for us. And the author of Hebrews is telling us here to stop and consider. Count the cost, and to remind ourselves of the worth and the value and the desirability of God. There are calculations of faith that stand in stark contrast to the evaluations of the world. The world looks at an experience they are undergoing, and they say, "I don't deserve this." And a Christian's calculation is very different. He says, "I recognize what I really deserve." And it doesn't mitigate the difficulty of the situation, but it sets everything in a right perspective. Or the world will say, "I am not going to do this or that just because God says to, I am not going to do it because it just doesn't work." Have you ever heard anyone say that, or are you tempted to think that about the Bible? "The Bible says this, but it doesn't work." I ask you, is that the way Christian's make decisions? Is our ultimate criteria what seems to work, or on what God has said? Do we believe, or are we considering all the data here? You know, the Lord told the Prophet Isaiah a glorious vision he had of Himself being high and lifted up, and Isaiah said, "here am I, send me." And God sent him to preach to the people of Israel, but He said, "by the way, they are not going to listen to you." And Isaiah asked how long he had to keep preaching if they were not going to listen—thinking it's not going to work. And God told him to keep preaching and preaching until He took them into captivity. God told him that was his job, his calling. We would say, then why bother preaching if we know it's not going to work?

But faith has a whole different calculus. In some ways faith makes decisions that look foolish to the world, but only wise when we are considering everything that God has revealed. In that realm, it is the wisest thing we can do. How can we do anything different? To do anything different is foolish. We don't make our decisions the way the world does. The world looks at something and they say that the Bible tells us to live like this, or to do something, and the world says it is just not worth it. We do things, or don't do things, that the world says is a waste of our lives. And we look at them and see they don't understand and that they are the ones wasting their lives because they are not taking into account all the details—they are just skimming the surface in their evaluation; they need to plunge down into every bit of reality, and that means to take into account what God has said and then make decisions. Faith evaluates, it calculates. It is not blind foolishness. And faith makes unexpected calculations in the eyes of the world, because...

- 3) Faith envisions. It sees things that others do not see. What does faith see, what is it looking at in terms of valuing and making its decisions that the world doesn't see? It sees things that are yet to come. Look at verse 9 again. Faith sees things as if they are present realities, what is still yet to come in our experience. By faith, Abraham went to live in a land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob heirs of the same promise. Why? Verse 10: He was looking. He was looking. He was looking forward to the city that has foundations. Or look at Verse 13: All of these fathers of the faith died, not having received the things promised, but having what? They saw the things they were promised. They didn't see the fulfillment, but they did see them! Faith sees things that other people do not see. What does faith see? For one, it sees future realities as if they are realities because God says that is what is going to be. They have a sort of inside information upon which to make their decision. They look and they see things with faith that are future realities, and they see things that are invisible to human eyes, not humanly perceptible.

Look at verses 26-27 again. By faith, Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater than the wealth and treasures of Egypt. I said earlier that our evaluation is based on this kind of vision. And here's what the text says: he made this evaluation because he was looking to the reward. He had his eyes on something that the court of Egypt couldn't see. The court of Egypt looked out at these poor Israelites sitting in slavery and they said, "these poor miserable wretches." But he looked out at them, considering all God promised and he saw something else. And notice that the author of Hebrews goes on to say, verse 27, "by faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king, who everybody could see, but he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. He saw the King on His throne, and that put everything else in perspective, because here is an earthly temporary king who could offer measly temporary pleasures, and yet here is the eternal King on His throne orchestrating all human history. And he said, "I know—it's not a toss up which way I am going to go." That's what Christians do they see things that are yet future and invisible to human eyes and they make decisions on that basis. We saw Moses' evaluation and now we seen his vision. He saw with eyes of faith the reward of Christ. One of the ancient writers said it this way: "The reward that he had his eyes on is nothing less than God, Himself, because man ought not to seek anything apart from God." Your greatest reward—what you ought to set your eyes on is not some earthly thing that you long for, but ultimately, on God Himself. That was Abraham's reward. It says in Genesis 15, "and God said to him, I am your protector and your exceeding great reward." Moses saw what the world could not see, the beauties of the invisible God. Things are not always as they appear, are they? And things will

not always be as they do appear presently to most people. The Bible says in 1 John that you are God's children in all the glory of what it means to be a child of God—you are God's child right now. But what you are has not yet appeared, not yet manifest, and yet it is a present reality. Things are not always as they appear, nor will they always be as they now appear to most people. Faith is the ability to see into the future, not just because I imagined the future, but because God has revealed the future. Faith sees into the future by taking these words at face value. And this is important: Faith makes everyday decisions based on the future. That's all faith is. Faith sees what is invisible and what is yet to come, and...

- 4) Faith speaks. Faith speaks in ways that reflect a believer's peculiar mindset. Notice verse 13; it says that they had knowledge, they confessed, they verbally affirmed that they were strangers in the land, but they believed that God would bring them back and give them a land, a permanent home, a dwelling, and so they purchased a possession there and they said in verse 20, that they pronounce blessings based on what God had revealed. And in verse 21, Joseph made mention of the Exodus, which was yet to come, saying, "when I die, take my bones into the land of Canaan." Why? Because he believed that was where Israel was going to end up, even though they were still slaves. There was no hint of getting out of slavery when Joseph said that. But he said it by faith. And here's the point: these people spoke, they all spoke out of faith. Faith speaks. Faith speaks about things in a way that reveals its confidence in God and all that God has said. And it is important, friends, to speak words of faith to self and to others, to remind them of the truth they know. There are times in our lives where we are all so weary that we can barely see the truth ourselves. And what we really need is a brother or sister to come along and speaking some truth to us, to verbalize confidence in all that God has said. That somehow it has a way of sustaining us, and somehow, when someone speak truth to me, I say in my own heart, "yeah, that's right, that's right and amen." It is one of the reasons you come to hear a sermon. You know these things are true, but the Lord uses us to speak truths to each other, and to a lost and dying world that needs to hear truth, a world that is blinded to these glorious truths. We speak them, we speak them so that God may be glorified in the world. And finally, we see here...

- 5) Faith acts. Faith acts. Faith acts in a way that—hear this—it acts in a way that corresponds with what it thinks and considers and sees and says. James says, you can say you trust Christ, but where is the proof? Faith is the basis on which we are justified, make no mistake. Faith alone. Christ alone. But faith is proven, and faith is displayed when it is tested at a specific point of action. And we live and we decide by faith. And these actions can seem very unspiritual sometimes. But if it is an act that is inspired by what God says, it is every bit as spiritual as getting up here and preaching a sermon. By faith, Noah built the boat. Now, I like to work with my hands, I like to make things out of wood. I'm not very good at it, I like it. But building something doesn't seem exactly spiritual to most people. What I'm saying is this: Every part of your life, every aspect, the way you use your money becomes an act of faith, a test of what you believe, a test of what you see as important in the way you're evaluating the world, and the way you are listening to the word of God and receiving it, or challenging it. The way that you choose to live, what kind of house you live in, the way you operate your family—everything, the way you plow up your garden in your back yard; the way that you eat or drink or do anything, in some way, is connected to what you think about the grand scheme of things. And so, what the author of Hebrews is saying here is that your faith will be manifested by the choices you make. And that has been true for all these people mentioned here in Hebrews 11. Their choices manifested that they trusted God. And they trusted God's promises. And so will ours. Our faith

will be manifested in what we do. So, brothers and sisters, speak words of faith to your own heart. Don't listen to your heart, speak to your heart. Calculate the benefits of living according to God's word. Go ahead and put it up against all the other benefits this world offers. Go ahead. See Him who is invisible. Confess your faith to one another and to the world. And act in keeping with all of that. For without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Heavenly Father, please strengthen our faith. Hearing these things we are convicted of places where we have made decisions that have not seemed to reflect very much faith, and looking back on those decisions now, and those directions of our lives, we are ashamed of them because deep down, we want to tell you that we really do trust you, we really believe you, our hope really is in Christ, we believe that He's worth giving up anything. But Lord, we long for our experience to reflect that more fully. We want to be of one mind about you. Please forgive our double mindedness and strengthen our faith. Lord, for those here who are really wavering in their faith in some particular areas, strengthen them, Lord, to believe and to act in what they know to be true. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.