

Faith (Part Three)

Lot

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We are going to begin back where we left off in Hebrews 11:24. We are going to review the section there about Moses as a lead-in for what we are going to talk today about faith.

Hebrews 11:24-28 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. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Last week, we took a look at this man, or let us say the faith of this man, and I would have to say that he came about as close as a human being can come to being the perfect model. He had an almost flawless record, at least from the things that are written in God's Word, but even Moses' faith broke down from time to time.

Probably the most notable example was the time, where in his exasperation about the Israelites and their continued rebelliousness and stiffneckedness, Moses struck the rock in a very angry attitude. As a result of that, of course, God made the decision that Moses would not be permitted to go into the Promised Land.

But Moses was a prime example of a person counting the cost and then casting his lot with the invisible God even though **everything that he could see** said, "Don't do it! Don't go this way!" It is essential to our understanding of faith to know that his was a deliberate and a reasoned act arrived at through the sifting of evidence.

What he did in walking away from Egypt also presupposes a firm conviction about his calling. In other words, there was in him a very strong, as we would say today, "feeling" that God was calling to him for this very purpose, and that God was going to use him, because it does say that when he intervened and tried to stop these two Israelites from arguing, it says there, he supposed they would understand.

So there was not only an understanding in Moses' eye or mind about what Moses was going to be doing for God, but also apparently it must have been general knowledge among the Israelites that Moses was the one that had been chosen to be the deliverer. Otherwise, why would the scripture say that Moses expected that they would understand? They did not understand. They did not reason the same way that he did. They did not sift the evidence in the same way that Moses did.

It is in this area that we have so much in common with Moses. Remember I said in last week's sermon that we probably have about as much in common with Moses in regard to this as we do anybody mentioned in this chapter. But we do not have to do the same things that Abel did, or that Enoch did, or that Noah did, or that Abraham did, but every single one of us has to look at the world around us, has to look at our own situation, has to look at our family, look at where we are going because of God's calling of us, and make a choice.

Am I willing to step away from this, or am I going to hang on to what I have? Am I going to believe in these things that I cannot see, and yet they are now a part of my thinking—they are becoming more and more a part of my life, and they are beginning to impact on what I am doing with my life—but am I willing to cast my lot with these things that are not yet, but yet they have the promise of Almighty God behind them?

It is very interesting to see that others have come to this place in their life and maybe on reflecting back on it they left it for a record like the apostle Paul did in Philipians the third chapter.

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these **I have counted loss for Christ.**

Counting is something that every one of us does. We add things up and we subtract things. We say, well I have this much money and I have this much that I am going to spend and I will have this much left over. Now we do that very frequently with money. What about other areas of life? What do we have to lose by following the way of God? By going the way of Christ? By going the way of faith, rather than going the way of sight?

Now unlike Moses, the apostle Paul had a very sudden confrontation with these things. Moses apparently arrived at what he did over a period of quite a number of years. He surely understood his origin, that his ancestry was certainly Israelitish. It does not seem as though all that much hidden was from him because he spent a measure of time with his mother. I do not know how much but certainly a couple of years, because she was his wet nurse even though he was in the household of Pharaoh's daughter. Gradually these things and, let us say, the pressure of doing something came upon Moses.

Now with the apostle Paul, the decision was virtually forced on him. One day on the road to Damascus he was struck down and he was confronted in a very telescoped period of time. "Oh, what am I going to do?" Because he certainly had a history behind him of persecuting the church and now he is confronted with, "What am I going to do?" He had three days, as it turned out, of fasting and blindness to make up his mind. Here he is writing the book of Philippians some twenty years later and he says, "I count these things as loss." He wrote them off. He is saying, "I made the right choice. I got baptized by that Ananias."

Philippians 3:8 But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, . . .

Is that not saying virtually the same thing recorded of Moses back in Hebrews 11—that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt for he looked to the reward? That is what Paul was saying.

Philippians 3:8 But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

The excellence of the knowledge of Christ...Moses did what he did because he sifted the evidence that was available to him, and he considered the evidence that God gave him—that is, the Word of God—as being of greater value to him than what he could see with his eyes. Now look at what Paul says in verse 8, "the excellence of the knowledge of Christ." The knowledge of Christ is contained for you and me in the Word of God. Paul's was a little more direct. Christ spoke to him directly and there was that fantastic miracle that took place, but nonetheless this Christ spoke to him and began the process of enlightening his mind in the true way that he should interpret and understand the Old Testament and all the prophecies that were there. Therefore the excellence of the knowledge of Christ also was contained in the word of God.

I am emphasizing this because I want us to see **where the evidence is** that we have to sift, because whether we are going to be able to say the same thing with Paul and with Moses is going to be based upon how we analyze and understand the knowledge of Christ Jesus. This expresses, I would say, as clearly as any scripture I know of, what we all have to come to. There must be in us a very clear focus of what is important and what is not. God's Word does that, but it is **faith** that enables us to process it in the right way. This faith comes from hearing God's Word. It is not something that comes by magic simply because one reads the Word of God. It comes because one analyzes what he is reading, he compares it with what his own experience is, and there are going to be times, are there not, when our experience is not covered with what the Word of God is telling us that we ought to do.

For example, up until the time of our calling, it is very unlikely that any of us were keeping the Sabbath, but God began to reveal to us that we were to keep the Sabbath. But we had little or no experience with the Sabbath and it is very likely that our experience that we did have with the Sabbath was one of antagonism. It could be that far or it could reach into that area, or skepticism which would not be quite so far. We might have known some people who kept it, maybe some Seventh Day Adventists or maybe we knew some Jews, and maybe our feeling about that coming from our own experience was not that good because maybe it was associated with Judaism.

What do you do in a case like that? You are beginning to be convicted by the knowledge that God is giving out of His Word and your faith is beginning to build, but your own personal experience is entirely lacking in this area except for touching with the lives of some people who did keep it. But what do you do? What do you do especially when you begin to count the cost that if you do keep the Sabbath the way the Bible says, you might lose your job, and so then we have to step out. Doing what? Trusting the Word of God.

But you do it after making an accounting of what it is going to cost, and then you come to the place where you feel that it is worthwhile doing it, you esteem the reward that you are going to get from God even though you do not now have it—the reward you are going to get from God because of your obedience to Him, because of your trusting Him. That is exactly the same process that Moses went through in a much, much more costly way. But it is the same principle.

Let us consider God's Word for just a bit because this is the basis of our reasoning. This is where the evidence is contained by which faith comes. In John 17:17 Jesus said that God's Word is truth. Truth there indeed does mean factual; something that is right and good. But we need to understand it in a little bit different way, and so what I am going to give here is a number of contrasts because this word that is translated "truth" is also equally well translated into the English word "real" or "reality." God's Word is reality. Another English word is the word "genuine"—God's word is genuine.

Let us make a few contrasts here. God's Word then is factual as contrasted to flawed. Man's word is flawed; some of it is true, some of it is not true. Man's word is corrupted by the fact that even though he may have good intentions, even though there is sincerity in terms of wanting to tell the truth, his experience just does not support his ability to really give us truth. God sees all things, He hears all things, He knows all things. He is Omnipotent, He is Omnipresent, He is Eternal, there is no beginning of days or end of life, He is the sum total of everything, and if **He** tells us something it has the weight of everything that He is behind it. So His Word is not flawed because it is impossible for God to lie. So God's Word is factual as contrasted to the word of man which is flawed.

In addition to that, God's Word is pure as contrasted to that which is contaminated. God's Word is genuine as contrasted to that which is hypocritical. The word of man may look good on the outside, but it is not all that good. God's Word is reality as contrasted to that which is fantasy or vanity. It is good to understand this because if we are going to use the Word of God in the right way, we have to believe it. We not only have to believe it, we have to trust it. When Jesus said that God's Word is truth and that we are sanctified by that word, we have to understand it from the point of view, or the perspective of God, that God's Word is pure, God's Word is genuine, God's Word is factual, God's Word is reality, and all those things are contrasted to man's word. Even though he has the best of intentions and sincerity, he cannot even begin to come close to the Word of God. Whose word are we going to use as evidence upon which to base our life if we are going to live by faith, live by trust?

I mentioned also last week that even though we walk by faith and not by sight, faith and sight have elements in common. The using of faith depends on one being able to see. I am using "see" here in three different ways.

The first way is the least important of the three and that is using "see" in the sense of literally witnessing something with our eyes. This is the least important of the three ways, but sometimes seeing something with our eyes can give our faith a boost. I know that most of us have heard in the past that very frequently dramatic healings may take place in a person's life very early in their conversion or as the person is **on their way** to conversion, and God will do that as a gift to people because they really do not have very much faith, not very much trust in Him, and sometimes it is like getting a shot in the arm for a person to actually witness an experience—something dramatic and miraculous. Witnessing something like this is, in the long haul, not all that important.

We have evidence in the Bible that what I have just said is true. Adam and Eve walked and talked with their Creator in the garden. They saw Him with their own eyes. You cannot get any closer. You cannot have a more visible witness of God than that. It did not stop them from sinning. We have the example of the Israelites in Egypt. Sure, a couple of thousand of years removed from Adam and Eve, but it did not help them all that much whenever they could reflect back upon what they saw with their own eyes in

Egypt. They saw the Red Sea parting, and they walked through on dry land, and they cheered and they sang the song of Moses in great joy, triumphing there with God because of what God did for them. They saw it with their own eyes. They turned right around and in a couple of days they were rebelling. Some faith!

How about those people at the time of Jesus Christ? How many people saw with their own eyes somebody receiving their sight, and then turned right around and **argued** with the man for whom the miracle was done? Let's turn to one example in John 6 because I think that this is important to our understanding of faith.

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Jesus saw right through their willingness to follow after Him. Their god was their belly. There was not faith there. They saw with their eyes, but they did not respond for the right reason. They were not really sifting the evidence in a spiritual way. Jesus came back with something that is important to this sermon:

John 6:27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.

Jesus confronts these people with a choice. He confronts you and me with a choice. He is telling us that there are two ways that we can go with the evidence that is given to us by our life's experience and part of that experience is having our eyes opened by God. Now it is almost like we are double-minded. On the one hand, spiritually, we can look through the eyes of God at things. On the other hand, spiritually, we can still look through the eyes of man at our own experience. So He says, "Make a choice."

John 6:28-29 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" [Then comes one of the key scriptures in regard to this subject.] Jesus answered and said to

them, "This is the work of God [Now what is God doing? What is God working?] that you believe in Him whom He sent."

The purpose of the manifestation of the works of God in Christ—the miracles, the feeding of 5,000, of 4,000, the healing of people, restoring sight, giving people hearing—were all done by God to produce faith that you should believe.

Let us consider that for just a moment, because if God did that for those people, would He not do the same for you and me? What God is doing in your life is shaping and molding events in order that your faith continually be strengthened. God wants us to trust Him, to trust His Word, and to respond in that way.

Let us drop down to verse 31. Again these are the people talking,

John 6:31-32 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

John 6:34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

They still did not get it because they were looking at this physically. But now do we get it? Yes, you do. You get it, and the very evidence of that is that you are here.

Now verse 44, that very famous scripture, fits right into this sequence of events:

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is the work of God to open our minds so that we are able to respond in a godly way, that is by faith to the manifestation of Himself through His Word.

For the manifestation of Christ through His Word, for the manifestation of the works of God through the knowledge that we get from His Word, Christ, so that we can see the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, which means therefore that God has given to each one of us the capacity to do what Moses did. Maybe not as perfectly, not having to trust in exactly the same way or to the same degree, but nonetheless, it is the same principle.

So even though we have a spiritual capacity by nature because of the spirit that is within us—all of mankind has the spiritual capacity—the true spiritual relationship can really only be made by those whom God is calling. We have been given a gift of God that enables us to have the kind of faith that Moses had, the kind of faith that the apostle Paul had.

Now we get back to Moses. I said when we opened this sermon that what he did and the things that are written in God's Word presupposes that Moses had a **conviction** that he was the deliverer, and he supposed that the Israelites would also see that and understand why he did what he did. But they did not get it. They did not see it the same way Moses did. That is why your neighbors do not see things in the same way that you do. God's Word has an impact on your mind so that you see a necessity, let us say for keeping the Sabbath or the Holy Days or tithing or whatever it is that is a part of the truth of God, and you are willing to count the cost and submit to Him in obedience because of the miracle that He has worked on our mind. So your neighbors can see things that you do and it does not have the same impact as it does on you and me.

Undoubtedly, the least important of these three aspects of the word "see" is being able to actually witness something. It is the least important though from time to time it may play a part in strengthening your faith. There are two other aspects that are more important to true faith, the faith of Jesus Christ, than actually being able to witness, because the faith that we are dealing with—does it not say that faith is the evidence of things not seen.

The second and much more important is vision. Vision is an aspect of the word "see." Vision here means "the ability to anticipate and to make provision for the future." We might call it having insight, or we might say having imagination. This one is very important to faith, and we will get back to it in just a little bit.

The third one I think is the most important of all and when it is combined with vision it is the one upon which true faith is really built and that is, understanding. Do we not say, "Oh I see it. I get it!" We are saying, "I understand it now." We can envision something, but when we really understand it, when we really grasp it, when we really get it, that is when we are really motivated. Vision can give us some motivation but vision, when combined with understanding, can really motivate a person because it is the right comprehension of facts.

Romans 1:19-20 Because what may be known of God is manifest in them ["to" them, it should read] for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen [we have sight there, we have vision there], being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and [Divine nature], so that they are without excuse.

God is invisible to us, but He has made clear **evidence** that He is. Of course right at this point Paul is just saying that the creation itself is evidence of the existence of a Creator, and that that Creator is not just Creator, but He is the Ruler and Sustainer and the Provider of what He has created. Other attributes of His also pour open the fact that He is the Creator God, so there is evidence available to everybody who lived that there has to be a Creator.

That is the beginning of faith, and it comes from what one can see. But it is the least important because we can see from the records that mankind has left on this earth in his history that even though he can see that there is a Creator, because they do not have the right vision, and because they do not understand in the right way so that they can process the facts that they *do* have, they do not have the faith that really trusts Him, either. So they do not live their lives in the right way. But we have this evidence and we have the Spirit of God and this impacts on us and gives us the ability to envision and understand what He is doing and to apply it in the right way.

The Word of God, the Bible, is a record that presents us with the evidence of the invisible God and His work. It does this in words. In addition to that it shows us **where to look** for additional evidence, evidence that we can use to support, or give strength to, or to clarify what might otherwise be a little

more cloudy or vague. We can look in what? History. We can look into what else? We can look into geology. We can look into biology. We can look into botany. We can look into archeology. We can look into anthropology.

There are disciplines of study that we can look into, and if we are processing it in the right way, **everything** then points to the fact that there is a Creator God, and that should undergird the spiritual faith that God has made available by means of His Spirit. It gives supporting evidence for what God has given us in His Word, and those other things may not be absolute necessities to us, and those other things that we get out of the secular areas may be flawed in their proof or whatever, there is enough from God to support and enable us to sift out what really is true.

We might ask, "Why did God ever decide to work His purpose by faith?" I am sure that we are never going to know every reason, but one of the more obvious is that faith, better than any other method than I can think of, reveals a person's character. Out of sight, out of mind. If a person will trust God, yield to Him, submit to Him, obey Him, when God **cannot be seen**, and he shows himself to be loyal and trustworthy and faithful when carrying out responsibilities, eventually that person's character is going to be in himself at the time because he is living it. And he does not have a gun to his head, he is not being forced or controlled, but by his own will, he is setting himself to obey this One whom he cannot see, and obey Him on the basis of the evidence that he is able to process.

One of the major themes that runs through Hebrews 11, especially when it is combined with a scripture that we are later going to look at in Romans 4, shows us that faith is **not** founded on imagination. But it is not, as we might say, "sheer" in the sense of being vaporous or easily seen through as a nylon stocking is sheer, but rather it is founded on good solid evidence. What Hebrews 11 does is that it approaches it this way, by showing us how important vision is to faith, that is trust, and how important analysis of evidence that produces right understanding is.

We are going to look at a series of phrases mostly, probably read most of the scripture, and the first group is going to be focused on vision. Look at how this is taught by the apostle Paul.

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

But if a person is going to go towards that which he hopes for and he does not see it yet, he is envisioning so. He is envisioning the possession of it.

Hebrews 11:3 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.

If it is not visible, it cannot be seen and it has to be envisioned.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen,

God said to Noah, "Build an ark. There's a flood coming!" One hundred and twenty years later, it came. Noah envisioned, though, that it was going to occur, and that vision was the motivation for what he did. So he spent the next 120 years building that big boat.

Hebrews 11:10 For he [Abraham] waited for [or looked for, as the King James says] the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

He had to envision it—the New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off [in their mind's eye]

Hebrews 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Figuratively—he envisioned it. What did he envision there? The resurrection of Isaac. We will get back to this verse in just a little bit.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

He envisioned the mighty God. We will stop there and turn to vision. Here we are in the faith chapter and vision—being able to perceive something in the mind's eye, being able to put form and shape on something in your thoughts from the evidence that is given in God's Word. What these people all looked forward to, the city whose builder and maker is God, the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of God, they envisioned it in their mind's eye.

Now how did they do this? They processed the information that was given in the Word of God. They compared it with the kind of world that they looked at with it. So they compared the two, the reality of the one with reality of the other. The one they envisioned, the other they could see with their own eyes. But the one they envisioned motivated them to do what they did in their lives, that is, trust in God.

Let us look at the other and, I think, the most important of the three. These people all analyzed the evidence that was given to them and understood it.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we *understand* . . .

That is, processing evidence, analyzing it, comprehending the facts, evidence that is given, and reaching a conviction about something. In this case, it is whatever it is that God has promised—the kingdom of God.

Hebrews 11:11 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.

See where faith comes from? It does not happen by magic.

Hebrews 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

What did Abraham do? The word "accounting" tells us a great deal. In the Greek language it is an accounting term. Do you know what an accountant does? He adds up figures. He puts them all in a row. He puts all of the receipts on one side, and he puts all the expenditures on the other side. He adds one total. He adds the other to get another total. And, then, he has an accounting of his net worth. Now the numbers are evidence of what his net worth is.

That is what Abraham did, only instead of it being numbers, he was adding up evidence. His evidence came from the **words** that God told him: "You shall have a son." It took 25 years, but he had a son. Then a number of years later God said to him, "Abraham, I want you to go out and sacrifice that son." "Uh oh. There's evidence there that I didn't count on," Abraham could have said. But it says that Abraham took off.

What evidence did Abraham have that could make him do what he was about to do in faith? The evidence that Abraham had was the Word of God. The Word of God had told Abraham that the promise was going to come through his son Isaac. Not through Ishmael, not through any future son that Abraham might have, but the promise was going to come through Isaac.

Now what did Abraham do with that evidence? He knew that there could be only two possible things that might occur. If Abraham was required by God to put Isaac to death, then God would either resurrect him or, the other part of the evidence was that if God was not going to require Abraham to kill Isaac, then God would give him a substitute. He added up the evidence and that is where the motivation came from for what he did.

That is what Moses did. That is why he did what he did and why he is such a towering example of faith. This is what we do not do so many times, but on the other hand, this is what we have done to permit us to be motivated for what we have done in obeying God, in yielding to God. Whether it is in keeping His Sabbath or whatever it is, we have processed the evidence just like Abraham did, just like Moses did, and then we made a choice that we were going to do what God said.

In verse 26, we will just touch on this, it says in regard to Moses,

Hebrews 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to [or had respect to] the reward.

Moses esteemed—he judged, and he placed a value upon—the evidence that he received from God as being far greater and worth more than all of the riches and all of the honor and glory that was available to him in Egypt if he just made the choice to go that way. But he turned his back on it because the evidence that was presented to him motivated him to go in the direction that he did.

Let us go back to Romans, and we will look at that other scripture just briefly, talking about Abraham.

Romans 4:21 And being fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was also able to perform.

If you have the King James, it says there that Abraham was fully persuaded. He allowed the evidence given by God to convince him that he should trust God. He added up the evidence and he did what he did.

This does not mean that Abraham never had doubts. He did have doubts. The Bible makes it very clear that he had doubts. The book of Genesis clearly shows that there were times that he turned aside from the path. In the case of producing his son, Isaac, he tried to do it through Hagar, and God had to show him that, "No, Abraham, your faith has broken down here. Ishmael is not the promised seed."

So his faith broke down on occasion and he, at times, had doubts creep in his mind so that he did not do things exactly right. Yet one thing we can learn from him, and I am sure this is one of the major reasons that God chose this man to be considered the father of the faithful, is that his overall trust in God never wavered. He, like you and me, from time to time processed the information, the evidence, in the wrong way, and he went the wrong way, and I am sure that there was a lot of emotion involved in his choosing the wrong way.

But God patiently worked with him and turned him back on the right way. You know the time that Abraham went down into Egypt, everything turned out wrong there. He should have never gone there. There is nothing in God's Word that said he had to go there. Abraham chose to go there and he almost lost his wife over it. What God is showing us in that experience is do not go back to Egypt, like Abraham did.

So even though we may have doubts arise from time to time, we can still trust God to bring us back on the path because He will patiently work with us. When a doubt does arise, sometimes it clarifies, does it not, because when there is a doubt, is it not implying that we are asking questions about whether or not what we are doing, or this course of action, is the right course? When doubts arise, do not feel as though you should never doubt, because there are going to be doubts arising because of our experience we have had in the world. But if we are patient and if we continue to trust God in an overall sense, it is going to clarify things. But let me warn you, sometimes reaching the clarification is going to be painful because God may take us through an experience to give us the understanding that we need to get things straightened out in an overall sense.

We do not have God speaking to us directly like these men had from time to time, but we still have God's Word, and we still have God's calling. We can reach a bit of a conclusion here, and that is that faith—godly faith—comes from the combination of God's Spirit working in our mind, plus studying God's Word (the excellency of the knowledge of Christ), plus related experience from the world, and then it is further strengthened by putting it to work.

We are going to take a look at a portion of a man's life whose name does not appear in Hebrews 11, because he was not a hero of faith, and yet there is evidence that he did have faith. He is such an interesting personality because of this. This man stands as a warning beacon to all of us because of his failure. His major failure, I think, was in failing to look at life through the eyes of God, that is, through the eyes of faith like Moses did, like Paul did, like Abraham did. But this example is also encouraging to us because it reveals to us the immensity of God's mercy toward us. Because even as God

was merciful to this man, he will also be merciful to us. But nonetheless his life stands as a warning to every one of us that God does not want us to go in this direction, and I am sure that is why the warning is there.

This man is Lot. Lot did not have a lot of faith. We are going to begin at a critical point in Lot's life because it makes a very significant statement about him there. This is just about the time that Sodom and Gomorrah are to be blasted into kingdom come, as we might say:

Genesis 19:16 And while he lingered, . . .

This was not his whole life, of course, but I think as we move along here you are going to find that this statement seems to catch the essence of what was a dominant characteristic in this man's life. It is the characteristic of a person who is not really **focused** on the Kingdom of God. Remember Jesus said, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto you"? Lot was not focused like his uncle, Abraham, was. Do you not think that a person who was really focused on the Kingdom of God and was living in the city of Sodom, and two angels (which we are going to see very clearly that Lot knew that these men were angels) came to you, and you were really focused on the Kingdom of God and they said, "Get out!" would you get out?—or would you linger? Does that not begin to tell you something about him. It does begin to tell you something about him because he was a man who was distracted. He was distracted by other things or interests that catch the eyes and, thus, the attention. He lingered—remember that phrase.

Let us go back into the New Testament and establish something else about him that I think is keenly interesting.

II Peter 2:6-9 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— [and then comes this phrase that is really so comforting] then the

Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.

Here is what is so interesting. Lot is three times in that section called righteous and one time he is called godly, and yet when we look back at the story that is written beginning in Genesis 11 and going all the way through Genesis 19, everything that is written about that man is negative. It is not good. It is not put in a good light at all, and yet he is called "righteous" and "godly."

I think that it is even more shocking to consider what I think is Peter's very obvious inference that he was righteous while all these bad, evil, wicked things were going on in Sodom. From that we can then conclude that he did not become righteous by and through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ **after** the shock of events that occurred with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but that he was deemed righteous by God before them and through the event. That righteous man, it says, was troubled with what was going on within the city. Therefore, Lot was not what we consider a bad man. He was not an evil man. He was not a wicked man. He was what we would consider to be a converted man. He had received the grace of God, and by the grace of God, righteousness was imputed to him, even as it is to you and me.

It says that he was tormented by the things that he saw in Sodom and Gomorrah. What does that mean? That means that he clearly understood about sin. It does not seem as though the Sodomites were concerned at all, but Lot was. He understood sin. He understood that these people were off the mark. Though he was not wicked, he did nothing to remove himself from it. There is the problem. He lingered. See, he was willing to coexist with it.

Genesis 13:13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

Pay very close attention to this because Lot **knew**—he knew when he made these choices, he knew of the awful conditions in the city even before he got there.

Let us go to Genesis 19:13. The angels are on the scene, and they say to him,

Genesis 19:13 For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.

He knew it was going to be destroyed and yet he lingered, and he knew that there was a God who kept His word. He could hardly not do that and understand that because he was Abraham's nephew. He knew the God of Abraham because that God had become Lot's God as well.

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!"

There is further proof that he knew. He believed in the danger. We have got to tie this to ourselves. Do we live in a spiritual Sodom and Gomorrah? Is the end coming? Is Christ returning? Is the Kingdom of God fairly close to us? Are we lingering in the worldliness that surrounds us? It is going to take faith to walk away. Lot believed to such depth that he urged his sons-in-law, and yet he lingered. Lot knew the angels were there, standing by and waiting for him and his family and they even tried to hasten him out, and yet he lingered. He was slow when he should have been quick. He was backward when he should have been forward. He was trifling when he should have been hasty. He was cold when he should have been hot. He was loitering when he should have been hurrying. We might say today, "Was this man out of it, or what?" In a major sense he was, and yet he was a converted man.

The world around us is, we might say at the very least, smoldering embers that are soon going to burst into the flames of the greatest tribulation that has ever hit the entirety of the earth. Unfortunately, many linger while the world is getting ready to burn.

What we have here with Lot is an example of true Christians who appear to know far more than they live up to, to be able to see and understand far more than they practice. They are people who love to hear good sound preaching. They believe in the doctrines of God, and yet they are constantly doing things that disappoint others around them. They believe in the Kingdom of

God, they even seem to yearn for it. They hate Satan, they believe in the Lake of Fire, and yet it almost looks like with their life that they do things to tempt Satan into testing them, putting the screws to them. These people believe that time is short, but they act as though they wish it was long. They know that holiness is a beautiful thing. They like to read about it in books. They love to see it in others. But they have the notion in their mind that it is impossible for them to be holy in that way and to be so spiritual.

Lot represents those people who dread personal sacrifice. They shrink from self-denial. They have a horror of being considered narrow-minded and so they tend to go to the opposite extreme and are so tolerant they would try to please everybody and be agreeable to everybody and they forget that they should first of all please God. These are the people who are trying to keep up with the world and they are ingenious at discovering reasons for not separating from it and so they will give themselves all kinds of justification for attending questionable amusements—wild, violent, sexy movies or whatever, holding on to questionable relationships. They persuade themselves that it does good to mix a little bit with the world.

Do you know a whole body of the church that is going in that direction? I know you know. They cannot find it in themselves to sternly do battle with **their** besetting sin whether it be laziness, a bad temper, pride, excessive self-concern, vanity, impatience—they allow it to remain in their mind, justifying, “Well, that's just the way I am. My daddy before me was the same way, and that's the way mama was, and I guess that's the way I'll always be.”

They are lingering while the world is beginning to burn down. These people are not really happy. They know too much and they are conscience-stricken. It bothers them. They are not really committed and they know it. Remember that I said last week that faith is the act of commitment? It is.

Let us look a little bit further into Lot's background because his pedigree, as we traced Moses' last week, is even in a way more interesting than Moses' was.

Genesis 11:26-31 Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. [Haran was

Abram's brother and Lot was Abram's nephew then.] And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. . . .

Drop down to chapter 12. We are refining it to Abram's relationship with Lot.

Genesis 12:4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Very early Lot is associated directly with what the scholars call the holy line. That holy line came through the flood in Shem. Remember from last week's sermon that Adam's life overlapped Methuselah's by 243 years. So we start all the way at the beginning. Adam, we jump to Methuselah, and Adam still lived another 243 years. Now Methuselah lived right up to the flood. He died in the flood, but while he was alive that last 98 years Shem was alive. Shem, then, was a direct connection, along with his father Noah, from the beginning with Adam all the way through the flood.

Now Shem lived for another 500 years after the beginning of Arphaxad who came when Shem was 100 years old. Shem lived to the ripe old age of 600 years. The last 150 years Abraham was alive. Now we have a direct connection from Adam to Methuselah to Shem to Abraham, and 150 years that Shem could relate things directly to Abraham that took place even before the flood. All of that experience, all of that personal history could be passed on directly to Abraham who was the uncle of Lot.

Haran died and Abram became Lot's adopted father, I guess you might say his guardian. But do not think that Lot was young, because I have calculated that even if Lot was only 25 years younger than Abram (and he might have been very close to his age), when they left his own land and went to Canaan, Lot was already 50 years old, and for 100 of those years he had lived side by

side with Shem. So the righteous Shem could pass on the history and the purpose of God right to Abraham and right to Lot directly.

Moses was a couple of generations removed and yet his faith was far greater than was Lot's who lived right during those times. We are not dealing with somebody who had no background and had no access to hearing these things directly.

Genesis 13:5-8 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. [They are coming out of Egypt and they were so wealthy] Now the land was not able to support them . . . And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's. . . . [And they began to quarrel with one another] So Abram said to Lot [proposes a solution], "Please let there be no strife between you and me," [he tried to be a peacemaker] "and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren."

He magnanimously gives Lot the choice of choosing the land that he wanted for his herds and flocks. Notice carefully what God records about Lot.

Genesis 13:10 And Lot lifted his eyes [a very revealing statement] and saw . . .

What is the least important aspect of seeing the faith? Eyesight. What is God beginning to tell us here? He is beginning to tell us that Lot lived by sight, not by faith. And even though God saved him, the man was what we would call today "carnal." Converted, but carnal. Just like Paul called the Corinthians in I Corinthians 3, he told them, "You are yet carnal." These were converted people. That is the way Lot was. So Lot lifted up his eyes, he saw the beauty of the land, saw that it would produce wealth, and he chose to ignore the evil that was plainly visible to anyone who cared to look at it.

Genesis 13:12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.

Genesis 14:12 They also [the five kings; this is an amalgamation of the kings, maybe it was four, but anyway the kings] took Lot, Abram's brother's son **who dwelt in Sodom**. . . .

We have moved one chapter. He is no longer outside the city; he is now living in the city and chapter 19 confirms that he was living in the city whenever the angels showed up. Step by step. Abram lived his godly life and God chose him, separating himself from the people of the land. Lot lives his life by faith, and even though he is converted, even though he knows the work of God, he chooses to mix himself in with the people of the land, and we see him sucked right into the midst of it. Now maybe he never intended when he made that choice—“Well, we can live there but we won't live in the city. We'll be in the outskirts and we'll kind of live the kind of life that we live out there,” but he ended up in the city. So he did not do it right away.

We do not know exactly why he did it. Perhaps Mrs. Lot had a great deal to do with it because the Bible seems to show her about as converted as a jackrabbit. Maybe he was a man with an unconverted wife. Maybe it was the daughters, because if Lot was even 50 years old he could of had daughters who were in their 20s and 30s, the ripe, prime, marrying age whenever this choice was made to go there, and maybe the argument would have been, “Well, Mr. Lot, our daughters don't have anybody to marry out here on the plain. If they were in the city, there would be plenty of young men there and they could get hitched and they could settle down into life.” And Lot, being carnal and not walking by faith said, “Well, God can't supply out here on the plain. He's got to supply somebody in the city. Yeah, let's go in there.”

Maybe it was Lot's idea because Lot seems to have his mind on making money, and maybe Lot said, “You know, I'm out here and I really don't have access to where all the business is being done, and it would be much better for trade and business if I just moved into the city there because I'd be right on the spot and I could trade things back and forth and I wouldn't have to do all this traveling in and out. It really makes good sense for me to go there.”

What we are seeing here is the contrast to Moses. Moses deliberately chose to turn his back on the world. Lot deliberately chose to go toward the world

and what occurred then was the association wore down his spirituality, wore down his resistance until his true spirituality was such that he did not really know much of the difference between right and wrong any longer. He really did not know what he wanted. He lingered in the city while it was getting ready to be destroyed. There is no surer way to go backward in one's spirituality, to blunt your feelings and knowledge of sin, to dull your spiritual discernment, than by mingling with the world. That's the lesson.

There is an interesting boast that David made. You can look at it yourself in Psalm 30:6-7. David said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved." Ha—that is just what Lot said: "It will not hurt for me to go down there. I will never be moved." Paul said, "Let those who think they stand take heed lest they fall." Lot crashed, because in his lack of faith and his spiritual pride, I am sure that he felt that he could stand strong against the spiritual onslaught of the world. So Lot became hesitating, undecided, a procrastinating man in the day of his trial because of the slow deterioration of his spiritual strength. It just simply wasted away.

We might reason that, yes, Lot made it into the Kingdom of God. And I think that he did, because God does, even after this, call him righteous. And I think that that is true, but you see the reason, the lesson, is there that God wants us to understand that though we make mistakes, and though He is magnanimous and merciful and forgiving, full of grace, still willing to say, "It could have been so much better."

It could have been so much better for Lot and for his family. We will not go through it, but again the record here, especially in Genesis 19, shows that his voice in the city of Sodom carried no weight at all. No one listened to him. Even his sons-in-law, or his future sons-in-law, whatever they were, did not listen to him. Not even one person would listen to his appeal. I would have to say from that, not even his family, incidentally, listened to him. There was nothing attractive, nothing magnetic, so that even his family showed him little or no respect. In fact, they mocked and there was contempt.

Do you know why? Well it is this way with all who are like Lot. They eventually come to be despised because their friends and their relatives cannot deal with that person's insincerity. He says, and he does not. And they would say things like, "Well, surely if he believed what he professes to

believe, he would not do as he does." You see, the eye of the family drinks in far more of the example than what is observed by the ear in what they hear the lingerer say.

There is one more thing that I want to bring to your attention and it is an omission from the Old Testament, and it says a great deal by not saying anything. The Old Testament writers seem to have a pattern of telling what happened to a person at his death. It says absolutely nothing about Lot. He just disappears from the scene. It does not say he died in a good old age. It says absolutely nothing about what he thought, about what he felt. He just disappears. There is painful silence. It does not say how old he was. It does not say where he died. It does not say who survived him or where he was buried. He just disappears from the scene. You see, it is the Bible's admission that this godly man, this righteous man, had no impact.