

## Why Does Faith Make Sense?

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Rich Nathan

July 5, 2015

Heroic Faith Series

Hebrews 11.1-3

Today I'm going to start a series that will continue through the whole summer on faith. And we're going to be looking at one of the most famous chapters of the Bible, Hebrews 11, which tells us about many models or heroes of faith. I've called this series Heroic Faith. In this opening message we're going to discover what faith is. Let me begin by praying and we'll look at Hebrews 11.1-3. I'm calling today's message, "Why Does Faith Make Sense?"

Hebrews 11:1-3 (NIV)

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

What I want to do today is to begin by talking about how faith is attacked. Then we'll look at what faith is. And, finally, we'll talk about why faith makes sense. So, let's begin with

How faith is attacked

There is a whole collection of writers and thinkers who call themselves the "New Atheists." You can find any number of their books at Barnes and Noble, or on Amazon. One of the core New Atheist assertion that is repeated endlessly on their websites is Richard Dawkins' statement that

*Faith is blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence.*

For Dawkins, faith is a kind of mental illness. Dawkins and others rail against faith because whereas the New Atheists prove their convictions with reason, religious people live in a fantasy world totally disconnected from reality. As Richard Dawkins puts it,

*Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence.*

It reminds me of the old joke about the kid, who was asked by his mom, "What did you learn in Sunday School today, honey?" The kid tells his mom, "We learned today that faith is believing what you know isn't so."

People, who are my age, remember the sitcom, All in the Family, with the star, Archie Bunker, says,

*Faith is believing what nobody would believe, if it weren't in the Bible.*

Faith is irrational. Faith is believing against the evidence. Faith is taking your brain and putting it in a rocket ship and shooting it to the moon.

And so the New Atheists love to talk about “blind faith” and something “taken on faith,” “a leap of faith.” What they mean is that people who have faith are acting and believing without sufficient justification. Beliefs that are not supported by facts or logic. Embracing ideas despite an absence of evidence or proof.

How is faith attacked? The New Atheists uniformly say, “We base our lives on reason. You Christians base your lives on blind faith.” How might Christians respond to the New Atheists?

Well, we might say that when you hold up the authority of reason above everything else, you are actually engaged in a circular argument. You say, “Reason is our authority when it comes to belief. And the reason we know that we can rely on reason is because reason tells us that it’s a reliable authority.” But how do you know reason is a reliable authority? Because reason tells us it is a reliable authority.

It’s a totally circular argument. It is like someone saying, “How long is that board?” You say, “Well, the board is 3’.” “How do you know that the board is 3’?” “Because I’ve taken a ruler and measured the board and it says that the board is 3’.” How do you know your ruler is accurate? “Well, I know that the ruler is 3’ long because right there on the ruler it says ‘3’.” Unless you have something outside of the ruler to calibrate the ruler, you don’t know if the ruler is accurately measuring or if it’s off.

Unless you have something outside of reason, external to reason to calibrate reason, you don’t know if your reason is flawed. With respect to your ruler, maybe the manufacturer of the ruler wanted to save a little wood and so they took a piece of wood that’s 2.5’ and they reduced the size of every inch just a little and labeled the whole thing 3’. “This is 3’.” Maybe through some evolutionary quirk your reason is flawed. Maybe it falls short like a 2.5’ yard stick.

Listen, we know that our five senses can often deceive us. Depending on what part of town you live in, you might have heard fireworks all day yesterday. Some of them may have sounded like gunshots. Some gunshots may have sounded to you like fireworks. Your hearing can deceive you. I may look out in my backyard and think I’m seeing a coyote, but it may be the neighbor’s dog. Our sight can deceive us. I may taste some cookies and think that they contain cinnamon, but it is really all spice. Our taste buds can deceive us.

But there is another and much more serious problem with exalting our reasoning powers to the highest authority beyond the illogic of reason resting on itself. The New Atheists seem to be unaware, or willfully blind, to the massive critique of reason that has happened in every quarter

for the last century and a half. Sigmund Freud undermined our confidence in reason by showing us that so much of our so-called reason is driven by unconscious urges. Reason is just the tip of the iceberg. But below the surface there all all of these other dark forces in our souls – our sexual desires, our appetites, traumatic events and hidden joys that are pushing and pulling us way beyond our stated reasons. The New Atheists say, “We’re completely rational. The only thing we care about is what reason can prove.”

Daniel Kahneman is a Nobel Laureate and Professor of Psychology at Princeton. He won his Nobel Prize in economics by demonstrating that human beings are not as rational as we think we are. I love this quote from him on the difference between economics and psychology.

*I was astonished. My economic colleagues worked in the building next door, but I had not appreciated the profound difference between our intellectual worlds. To a psychologist, it is self-evident that people are neither fully rational nor completely selfish...*

In other words, what Dan Kahneman, is saying is it is absolutely taken for granted by psychologists and by anyone who looks in the mirror for just a moment that we human beings are often irrational. Our thoughts are often illogical. The fact is we rarely realize how irrational we are. We think we’re seeing the world the way it is and we’re making really good decisions, but our judgment is impeded by a thousand little things.

I mentioned Dan Kahneman’s best-selling book, Thinking Fast and Slow, a few years ago.

Book Cover of Thinking Fast and Slow by Dan Kahneman

We have copies of this book in our bookstore at Cooper Road. But this book speaks about how surprising are the things that influence how we make decisions. Let me give you one fascinating illustration of what I’m talking about.

There was a study done of judges in Israel and how often these judges granted parole to prisoners in Israeli jails. So they randomly assigned cases to these judges. Some of the cases involved criminals who had committed serious crimes; others involved more minor crimes. Now the judges worked through these cases all day long, day after day, going through this huge volume of parole cases. The times that the cases were decided were exactly recorded as well as the times of the judges three food breaks – a morning break, a lunch break, and an afternoon break. What the authors of the study did was they compared how many requests for parole were granted against the time since the last food break.

Here is what they discovered. Right after the judges ate, their granting of paroles spiked 65% and then gradually went down to 0 before their next food break. When their blood sugar was up, they granted parole. When their blood sugar was down, they didn’t. The explanation for this according to the study’s authors was: when you feel depleted you don’t have the mental energy to really dig into whether someone deserves parole or not and so you drop back to the default position,

“leave them in jail.” When you have energy, you dig in and so some of those people were granted parole. The point is we think we’re so rational and reasonable about our judgments especially really important things like whether someone should stay in jail or be set free or who we hire for a job. And this study indicates that what drives many of our decisions is whether we’ve eaten or not.

There are a thousand things that affect our thinking that have nothing to do with whether something is good or bad, true or false, reasonable or unreasonable. We are affected by our digestive system, pushed by our environment, persuaded by things are ridiculous as seemingly inconsequential as the color of the paper a message is on.

And to finish deconstructing the New Atheists’ attack on faith, let me just share with you my own experience having talked with hundreds and hundreds of people over the last 40 years concerning what folks’ real problem is with considering Christian faith. The vast, vast majority of people who I’ve talked with over the last 40 years who were struggling with faith are not raising with me intellectual or philosophical problems with Christianity that haven’t been brilliantly responded to for the past 2000 years. The vast majority of people that I’ve talked with, who say they can’t believe, are not saying, “I can’t believe because of intellectual problems. I can’t believe because of philosophical problems.” It is “I can’t believe because I associate faith with some negative experience from my past.”

It is these negative associations that keep people from seriously investigating Christian faith. For example, my late father-in-law was raised as a Roman Catholic and went to Catholic schools in the 1920’s. Some of the nuns were absolutely ruthless. He would talk about how many times he or other kids in the room would get their hands whipped by an angry nun, who was carrying a long pointer stick and who decided to take out her frustrations on little boys and girls. Christianity equals getting your hand whipped by an angry, frustrated nun.

For other people Christian faith is negatively associated with hell, fire and brimstone sermons delivered by an angry preacher at the fundamentalist church their parents dragged them to. Or the negative association of the anti-intellectualism of their family’s Pentecostal church; or the with some conniving adulterous pastor; or some anti-feminist message taught by some misogynist preacher; or the connection between Christian faith and right-wing politics, or Christian faith and left-wing politics.

The attack on faith raised by the New Atheists is not new and it is not terribly sophisticated. But their arguments find a home in people’s hearts because of a thousand other things – negative associations and hidden fears like the fear of losing professional respect, or the fear of what someone’s boyfriend or spouse or family member will think, or even the fear of having to change something we don’t necessarily want to change, if we adopted Christian faith.

What is faith?

What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1–3 (NIV)

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2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

The Book of Hebrews was written to people who were being beaten down by life. The writer is writing this letter to folks who are undergoing tremendous difficulty and hardship. The writer is saying that what you need if you are going to successfully handle the pressure you're under, you need to continue in your Christian faith. So what is faith?

My favorite writer, CS Lewis said that faith is complicated; it is not easily understood. After Lewis' wife died, he wrote a heart-wrenching book titled A Grief Observed.

Book Cover A Grief Observed by CS Lewis

In the book Lewis writes:

*You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you're merely using it to cord a box.*

In other words, if you are just using a rope to tie up a package, you can say it's strong. But you really don't know how strong you believe that rope is, unless its strength is a matter of life and death to you; until, for example, you are climbing the side of a mountain and the rope is the only thing that's keeping you from plunging to your death.

So what is faith?

What is this Christian faith that is under so much regular attack by New Atheist writers like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett? What is faith? Is faith the kind of certainty that I get in figuring out a math problem? I know every time I add 2+2, I will always get 4. I know every time I pray this way, I'm going to get this certain result. Is faith a kind of mathematical certainty about a particular outcome? Or is faith the kind of feeling you get when you are hanging onto a branch that is extended off of a cliff? You are hanging on for dear life, but your fingers are getting sweaty and your arms are fatigued, and you are afraid you are going to fall into the abyss of unbelief and meaninglessness?

What is faith? Faith is a super-important word in the New Testament. It is used over 24 times. We're told by the New Testament that faith is so important that it is a prerequisite for being

saved by God. On one occasion, a jailer asked Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” Here is their answer.

Acts 16:31 (NIV)

31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Hebrews 11.6 tells us that faith is so important that

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

6 ...without faith it is impossible to please God...

So, let’s look at Hebrews 11.1-3 again.

Hebrews 11:1–3 (NIV)

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2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11.1-3 doesn’t provide us with a comprehensive definition of faith, but they do tell us several things about the nature of faith. The first thing we discover is

Faith is rational

Biblical faith is never set against reason. Biblical faith, Christian faith, involves thinking. It involves our brains. Look at the words used to define faith in Hebrews 11.1-3.

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Christian faith is never a leap in the dark. I don’t know if there is a ledge below this cliff or not, but I’m just going to run off the edge of the cliff and hope against hope that there is something there to catch me and that I don’t die. In v. 1

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

The Greek word for assurance is

Elenchos

Some of the older translations like the King James Version translates v. 1 this way:

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11.1 is giving us a short-hand definition of faith. It is telling us that faith is rational and if you want a definition of faith,

Faith is trusting what we have good reason to believe is true.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Evidence appeals to your mind. Some of the New Atheists set up the argument for evidence demanding that what they call the God-hypothesis be subjected to the scientific method for determining truth. That the only valid way to approach God or this hypothesis of God, they say, is by using rules that apply to science and the laboratory. But the proper response to the New Atheists is “who says?” Who says that the only valid evidence for believing something is evidence that fits the scientific method? There are lots of things that rational people believe is true that can’t be proven by the scientific method. There are lots of things that we believe that can’t be proven in a lab.

Like what? Like any fact of history. You can’t prove in a lab that the American Revolution took place, or that the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, or that George Washington was there when the Declaration of Independence was signed. We believe this based on historical evidence – eyewitness testimony, records that were kept, historical investigations.

There are lots of things that we reasonably believe that can’t be proven by the scientific method. Not only the facts of history, but our predictions of the future based upon our personal relationship with someone. I can’t prove to you that when my wife, Marlene, cooks me dinner tonight that she will not poison my food. No lab experiment can predict the future of a person’s behavior. But I have good reason to believe that she won’t poison my dinner. We’ve eaten together for 40 years. During that time she’s cooked about 12,000 meals. She hasn’t poisoned my yet; at least I don’t think she’s been slowly poisoning me. So I have good reason to believe she won’t poison me tonight.

Christian faith is rational. It is based on evidence that appeals to our minds. I will get to some of the evidence for Christian faith in just a moment.

But you might say, “Oh, Rich, come on. I can go online and find contrary arguments to almost anything you raise. There will be someone somewhere out there who will take the opposite perspective. I’ve read things that have raised questions in my mind. I might read things in the future that might raise questions. Does the fact that I have questions, that I always have questions about Christian faith and the future, does that mean I have no faith?”

Friends, reasonable faith is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Either you have faith in which you are completely certain about something, or you have no faith at all. Jesus tells us that even a little bit of faith can go a long way. Faith is not an all or nothing proposition – either you have it or you don't. I think about the man who came to Jesus asking Jesus to heal his son. Jesus says, "Everything is possible for the person who believes." And the man responded the way that most of us need to respond to Jesus most of the time: "I believe, help my unbelief."

For most of us, most of the time, faith is like a picket fence that separates your house from your neighbor's. If you look at a picket fence, is the fence there or not? Well, it's there. There are definitely boards there. But a lot of the fence is just air. And every once in a while something shattering happens in our lives and pulls out a few boards. But the fence is still there. And every so often we have a dramatic experience of God and a few boards are nailed up in this picket fence. But the fence was already there.

What is faith? Faith is trusting what we have good reason to believe is true. Faith is rational. And second, Hebrews 11.1 tells us that faith grabs hold of the future.

#### Faith grabs hold of the future

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Faith grabs hold of the future. This is one of the major themes of the entire chapter of Hebrews 11 faith. Faith grabs hold of something in the future and brings it into the present. Look for example at v. 6:

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Or concerning Abraham:

Hebrews 11:10 (NIV)

10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Or concerning Joseph:

Hebrews 11:22 (NIV)

22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

Hebrews 11:26 (NIV)



26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

So in v. 1, when the writer says

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

That's the Greek word

Hupostasis

It literally reads:

Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

Faith gives substance to things hoped for.

Here is a kingdom perspective of faith. Faith reaches into the future kingdom of God and gives the kingdom of God substance, in our present moment. What's the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is what the world will be like when God completely runs the show. The kingdom of God is what life will be like when there are no wills contrary to God's will, no human wills rowing in the opposite direction. "Yes, I know what you want, God, but I don't want that, so I'm going to row in the opposite direction." The kingdom of God is what life will be like when there are no wills contrary to the will of God – no human wills contrary to the will of God, no demonic wills contrary to the will of God. The kingdom of God is what the universe will be like when there is nothing and no one who is ever saying "no" to God.

And when the kingdom of God is established, no child will ever die again. There will be no more cancer, no more heart disease, no more heartbreak, no more Alzheimer's, no more diabetes, no more murders, or kids in jail, or funerals, or wars, or mental illness, or addiction. All the things that oppress this world now, all the things that tear life down now, they'll all be removed.

And what does faith do? The writer of Hebrews says "Faith grabs hold of the future kingdom that's coming when Jesus the Messiah returns." And faith gives substance to that future kingdom and makes it real now. By faith we bring God's kingdom of justice into this world now as we work for justice. By faith we grab hold of God's future kingdom of healing into the world as we pray for the sick. By faith, we grab hold of God's future kingdom of forgiveness and we make it real now.

Faith is rational. Faith grabs hold of the future.

Faith is a way of seeing the present

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Here is another theme that runs through all of Hebrews 11. The heroes of faith are not only people who grab hold of the future. The heroes of faith are people who have a way of seeing the present. People of faith see what other people don't see. Look at v. 3.

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11:13 (NIV)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Hebrews 11:27 (NIV)

27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

Ultimately, friends, faith is seeing life the way Jesus saw it. The New Atheists say that faith is looking at life through rose-colored lenses. Scripture says, oh no, quite the opposite. Faith is taking off your rose-colored lenses. All the myths and lies that the marketing machine of America keeps pumping out – “you can have it your way,” “Life is all about you and your desires, your wants,” “The best possible life is found by being true to who you really are even if that means you need to break your commitments, or walk away from your promises, or hurt people you say you really love.” Faith is taking off those rose-colored glasses and it's looking at life the way Jesus looked at it. He was the only clear-sighted person in all of human history. He is the only one who saw with perfect vision how to live a completely full life no matter what your circumstances are.

Jesus taught if you want to have a great life, what he called abundant life, don't try to affirm everything about yourself. Instead, deny yourself – keep your commitments to God, keep your promises, don't hurt people you love – hey, to say no to ourselves in a culture that teaches us to always say yes to ourselves and our desires and our appetites, that takes faith. Jesus taught that it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, if you want to live a great life, here is how you do it. Forgive everyone for everything they've done against you and you will live a full life. Forgiving takes faith that God will uphold you and defend you. It doesn't matter if you are single or married, and if you are married if your marriage is easy or challenging. Jesus says, “You do to the will of God. Do what God is asking of you and you can live a full life.” Faith is seeing life the way Jesus saw it. It is not putting on rose-colored glasses and trying to make yourself believe what you don't believe. It is taking off the rose-colored glasses handed to you by every lying advertiser

and every desperate broken philosopher, or screenplay writer or author, or singer, or artist. Faith is a gift of God's Spirit where God enables us to see life the way Jesus saw life.

So why does faith make sense?

Why does faith make sense?

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Certainly, by this verse we understand that God called the universe into existence out of nothing. He declared that the universe was to be and it was. The entire universe was formed to God's command. God simply said the words, "Let there be," and what he wanted came into being.

But this verse is teaching more than the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo, creation out of nothing. This verse is telling us that the visible reality that we see, rests on an invisible foundation that faith lays hold of. This verse is teaching us that the foundation of what we really experience of life, the foundation is an invisible foundation. Contrary to the New Atheists, Christian faith makes sense. Christian faith sees that all visible reality rests upon invisible reality.

What does that even mean? Let's say you're talking with someone who says, "I don't believe in any spiritual realm. I don't believe in your Christian God, or angels or demons, or heaven and hell, or anything that you can't see. I don't think there is such a thing as an invisible reality. I think the visible universe is all that exists." How does Hebrews 11.3 respond to the person who says, "The visible universe is all that exists?"

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

You might ask that person if they believe what ISIS is doing in Iraq or in Syria, cutting off people's heads, or going into villages and raping all of the women and girls, do you believe that that is wrong? How about the murder of 9 people in a church Bible study? You think that's wrong? "Yes, of course. It's wrong." Why do you believe that's wrong? Is it simply a cultural preference based upon your Western or democratic values? Or should these killers in Iraq be prosecuted for violating some universal norm of justice. Who says there is something inherently wrong with cutting off the heads of civilians, or raping women, or murdering people in a church?

Let me press the case further. Do you believe that the Nazis who committed genocide during the Holocaust should have been prosecuted in the Nuremberg Trials for violating the human rights of Jews? Or was the United States wrong to prosecute the perpetrators of genocide? If you say no that the United States was right, then I would ask why? Why do you think the Nazis should

have been prosecuted for murdering 6 million Jews? Who says that murdering Jews, or genocide, or raping women, or raping girls during a war is wrong? Who says that your American laws should govern everyone else? The Nazis defense at the Nuremberg Trials was that they were following the law of Germany. We were following orders.

Friends, if you or anyone you talk with, says there is something wrong with rape, with torture, or with genocide – no matter who does it, or under what circumstances, or what their laws or customs say – that principle is resting on an invisible reality.

My Constitutional Law professor at OSU became one of America's great constitutional law scholars. He said that "the foundation of human rights rests upon this notion of the inherent dignity of every human being. The only way to establish the inherent dignity of every human being is from a religious ground." There is some higher authority, a God, who gives us this dignity. My law professor, Michael Perry, said that you cannot come up with a non-religious ground, a secular ground, for human rights because the response will always be, "says who?" Why should your principle govern? Is it just because you won the war? Just because you have the biggest military? Just because you have the most money?

Visible realities, like human rights, ultimately rest upon the invisible reality that God created human beings and bestowed upon us inherent worth and dignity.

Let's take just one more illustration of the truth of Hebrews 11.3, in closing.

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Visible reality always rests upon an invisible foundation. Someone says I think that the visible universe is all that exists. I do not believe in invisible reality. I don't believe in a Christian God. I don't believe in angels or demons, or heaven and hell, or any of that invisible stuff. The visible universe is all that ever was. The visible universe is all that ever is. The visible universe is all that ever will be. How would you respond based upon Hebrews 11.3?

You might ask the person, "Do you believe in love?" Have you ever said "I love you" to someone and meant it? Tim Keller, the best-selling author and pastor of Redeemer's Church in New York City, quoted from an article by a psychology professor, who does believe that the world is all that there is, that everything has a natural cause and everything is physical. He loves to tweak his students in class by reading the beginning of a book by Francis Crick, who was the scientist who discovered DNA. Francis Crick wrote a book titled The Astonishing Hypothesis. Here is the opening lines of the book that the professor loves to read to his students:

*You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of*

*nerve cells and their associated molecules... You're nothing but a pack of neurons, everything you feel, everything you experience, is really nothing but chemistry. Chemistry is why you feel that way.*

The professor goes on and says:

*Most of my students are very troubled when I tell them that "love is nothing but a consequence of appropriate amounts of oxytocin (in women) and vasopressin (in men), released in conjunction with sexual satisfaction.*

Now, students react and they say, "Wait a minute. Love is not just my chemicals or my genes. I want my boyfriend to love me not because of a chemical reaction, but because he values me. And I want to love him because I value him." The professor says, "Sorry, that's just the way it is. Your feeling of love is just wishful thinking."

Friends, without invisible reality as the foundation for visible reality, then everything that you believe, everything you feel, dissolves into meaninglessness. You say you love someone, all you are doing is making a statement about your body chemistry because there is no real thing called love. You say something is beautiful, you are just saying something about the way light strikes your optic nerve. There is nothing real about beauty. There is nothing real about justice. What Hebrews 11.3 is teaching is what our deepest intuitions agree with.

No, we protest. There is something right and wrong. Love is real. Beauty is real. Pleasure is real. It is better to be kind than to be cruel. It is better to be generous than to be selfish.

Those are all faith statements. The writer of Hebrews is telling us that faith makes sense! Faith makes sense! In the New Testament the starting point of faith is believing the message that God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. The beginning point of Christian faith is believing the message that Christ accomplished human salvation by dying an atoning death on a cross outside of Jerusalem in about 30 AD. Faith is the attitude whereby a person abandons all reliance on your own efforts to obtain salvation. A person abandons all reliance on their own deeds, their own morals, their own goodness, their own trying and the person simply trusts in Christ and him alone for salvation.

Some of you today are ready to make an initial step of Christian faith by declaring perhaps for the first time, "I'm going to stop relying on my efforts, my goodness, what I can produce to save me before God. I'm going to trust in Christ and what he accomplished for me by dying on a cross for my sins. I'm going to put my whole reliance on Christ." If you are ready to do that, I'm going to ask you in a moment to stand.

Gospel Call.

## Why Does Faith Make Sense?

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Rich Nathan

July 5, 2015

Heroic Faith

Hebrews 11.1-3

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