

RIGHTLY DIVIDING[©]

TITLE: PLEASING GOD

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Hebrews 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

CONTEXT:

Hebrews was written because Jewish Christians were in danger of apostasy from Christ back to Moses. This condition of apostasy was an immediate danger (2:1) based on neglect of the scriptures (2:1), unbelief (3:12), refusal to teach others (5:12), conduct (5:13-14), neglect of public worship (10:25), weakness in prayer (12:12), and instability in doctrine (13:9). The author of Hebrews stressed the superiority of Christ to show the inferiority of Judaism. The line of reasoning – If following Christ brought persecution and Jewish practice did not, why not return to Judaism and be free from persecution? The answer is set forth in the Epistle as the superiority of Christ is argued point by point against the claims of Judaism.

The argument of the Epistle can be captured in two main ideas: (1) consider Christ and (2) exhortation. The whole purpose of the letter was to inform the discouraged Christians and to encourage them to support both approaches by innumerable examples of Christ and of those who had successfully lived by faith.

HISTORICAL FACTS

A number of factors regulate the date for the Epistle. The most important factors are the Jewish-Roman conflict after A.D. 68 and destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. Because nothing is mentioned concerning the conflict, the Temple, or the destruction of Jerusalem, the letter could have been written before 68 or after 80. The earlier date is preferred because of the mention of Timothy and “they of Italy”. Who wrote Hebrews still remains unclear. The authorship has been attributed to Apostle Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, Aristion, and Philip. However, the Alexandrian tradition and influence, based on use of the Old Testament in a typological manner leaves Philo of Alexandria as a likely candidate of authorship (ref. KJV Bible 1142)

Hebrews 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 11 is a conversation about “what is faith”. Many Christians are challenged with the understanding of faith. However, the writer of Hebrews has challenged the believer to understand the nature of faith by formulating a definition that is profound but yet delicate to grasp. Hebrews 11 gives specific examples of the believer’s faith and that it took something different for every believer suggesting that no two people’s faith is alike. We understand from the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans that God has dealt to every man a measure of faith (12:3).

Hebrews 10 prepares us in that it expresses the elements of the faith life and gives us a description of the new and living way. To understand faith believers must recognize the failure of the old covenant and the purpose of Christ as the new covenant i.e. high priest who shed his blood for the remission of sin that we may enter into the presence of God. Believers are given a plea to hold

to the new faith – “Let us hold fast (be persistent in) the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised” (10:23).

Hebrews 10 also gives a prerequisite of faith – “Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (10:38). This prerequisite is a recitation of Habakkuk 2:4 – “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.” Therefore, we understand that just (righteous) believers live by faith.

In this sermon series on faith, we have defined faith and its foundation. This sermon will review the importance of having faith as an element to please God.

MESSAGE:

The writer has defined faith by inviting the believer to understand the foundation – substance and evidence that surrounds the hope for which the believer engages. Hebrews 11:6 express that if a believer lacks faith; he or she

will lack what it takes to please God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Let’s begin with what has

been made obvious – a lack of faith. The author has included a very bold statement, which suggests that there is a struggle with believing or perhaps there are those that waiver in their belief. Hebrews 11:6 is the second statement regarding unbelief. Unbelief appears first in

Hebrew 3:12 and it reads, “Take heed brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” The writer has made this statement after giving a “word of knowledge” by the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit has invited the Hebrews to hear

HEBREWS 11:6

Are you in Faith?

Rewarder of the Diligent

“By faith E'-noch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.”

Hebrews 11:5

the voice of their leaders and harden not their hearts as their fathers did in the wilderness (3:7-9). Holy Spirit expressed His grief with the former generation, their character flaws, and their inability to know His ways (3:10). Holy Spirit ends with a statement of wrath and what shall befall those that continue in error – they will not enter into His rest (3:11). The forfathers failed to obey the old covenant (law) and erred in their hearts. The writer of Hebrews found it necessary to warn the believer regarding an evil heart of unbelief that would make them walk away from the living God.

Hebrews 11:6 is a reminder statement that without faith – i.e. following the ways of the living God and keeping themselves from error – it is impossible to please Him. We understand from previous scripture (Hebrews 3:12) that there are believers that waiver in their faith and struggle with a heart of obedience.

Hebrews 11:6 also follows a statement of merited faith and true obedience which is found in Hebrews 11:5 i.e. the faith of E'-noch who was translated and did not see death. The author suggested that E'-noch received such a merit of faith to not see death because he pleased God. This merited faith leads to our feature text.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him”

The author of Hebrews suggests that without faith

(in Christ the new covenant) it is impossible to please God. In the Greek, ***impossible*** [***adunatos***] means the inability of the Law, what the Law could not do, the weakness of the Law, that which was impossible for the Law, and the sense that the Law could neither justify nor impart life.

In Hebrews 11:6, if the believer is without faith, they are trusting the law, continuing to err in their hearts, and failing to please God. The ramifications of being without faith is not receiving life (i.e. life eternal through Jesus Christ) and not being just (i.e. not being in right standing) before God. Because faith is a requirement to please God, the believer cannot receive merit that calls forth the existence of God. It was important for the Hebrews to understand the inability of the Law to produce life and justice. There was a need for this Christian community to believe in Christ's priesthood thus having the ability to walk in faith and believe for life and justice.

Scholars also suggest the ***adunatos*** means unable, incapable, no strength, and powerless. The lack of faith leaves the believer incapable and powerless in terms of pleasing God. Technically, there is no strength and the believer is rendered unable. Believers without faith are in a weak position!

Hebrews 11:6

Are you pleasing God?

Rewarder of the Diligent

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Hebrews 11:8

Hebrews 11:6 is an obedience scripture. The believer must do things God's way in order to please Him. Doing things God's way requires the believer to know God.

"for he that cometh to God must believe that he is"

The writer sets the tone for the importance of knowing God. Here in the text we must employ **who God is** which suggest that the believers have gone through some discourse of learning **who God is** and the benefit in knowing Him. For the Hebrew, there would be a familiarity with Exodus 3:14 which reads "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The traditional requirement for the Hebrew is an acceptance of God i.e. believing in the very existence of God like Enoch and others.

Understanding who God is, is important for the Hebrew nation. God has not changed from past history. However, their belief system is shaken! The author is concerned that this nation has failed to know who God is and therefore the words of this text is a re-contextualization that can be explained by examining Psalms 78:22 and Psalms 78:32. The Psalms reads, "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation." It suggests that the Hebrew nation is now revisiting something that is familiar to their people. There will be punishment for not knowing and trusting who God is for His

people. Psalms 78:22-29 lists carefully all the things God has performed for the Hebrew nation. Their attitude toward God's performance is found in Psalms 78:32 – "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works." The Hebrew nation thrived in provoking God, grieving his Spirit, and tempting him (Psalms 78:40-41). Therefore, the author of Hebrews is warning against not knowing who God is so that judgment does not come as it did in times past.

This subtle review of Psalms 78 guides us into understanding the importance of knowing who God is. When you know God, then you understand ...

"that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"

The author is suggesting that having faith allows the believer to please God. The author is also suggesting that there is a drawing to God (he that cometh). Therefore, faith draws you to God and faith is also responsible for the diligence in seeking the Lord to receive reward. In the Greek, **seek** [*ekzēteō*] signifies to seek out, after, to search for the Lord. Ideally, God is a rewarder to those that seek out, seek after, and seek for the Lord. The author is also suggesting that in order to please God we must first believe that He is (i.e. the same God from past history) and is ready to reward those that seek after the Lord diligently.

“that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”

In the Greek, **rewarder** [*misthapodotēs*] means one who pays wages and it is used of God as the rewarder of those who seek after him – recompence. Therefore, the author is suggesting that God gives a reward to the believer that seeks diligently after the Lord and Him.

We cannot seek after or be in search of the Lord without having faith in who the Lord and God truly are to humanity. God is a discerner of the thoughts and intent of the heart. Therefore, God knows if the believer is seeking after diligently the Lord and operating in faith. Faith employs that we are righteous (i.e. in right standing before God). In the position of right standing, God gives us reward. Psalms 58:11 and Psalms 34:10 verifies the reward – “So that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” and “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

MESSAGE NOTES:

1. The believer can be without the proper level of faith. Faith comes in measures (Romans 12:3).
2. Do not look for impossible things in your faith walk. Impossible things are ideas and dreams that render you powerless. Look for things God has promised because in those things God’s answer is yes and amen.
3. Desire to please God.
4. Test your faith! Listen for the instructions that God has given you and act on those instructions.
5. Be drawn to God. Do not work to escape the call of God on your life.

6. Understand the reward of God. God is going to provide the things connected to his leading and promise. Like Abraham, God promised Abraham a land that would be shown unto him. Abraham walked by faith, which became his righteousness and God rewarded that land as promised.

7. Be diligent because it is a requirement of God.

PERSONAL MESSAGE NOTES:

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MESSAGE ILLUSTRATIONS:

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Concluding Thoughts...

Faith is about obedience! God has spoken to believers the requirements and intent of His heart. Therefore, it is up to the believer to obey the things that are in the heart of God. Faith is given in measures and the believer must embrace faith based on their current measure. God does not require us to believe things that he has not given us the faith to believe.

Oftentimes, believers do not receive what they petition God for because they have stepped into a measure of faith not assigned by God. The believer is seeking things that God has not promised. As believers, we need to return to the basic of our faith: (1) allow God to speak concerning a promise, (2) obey the direction of God, and (3) allow God to fulfill His promise without guiding Him. If the believer follows the three basic steps, he or she will reap the reward of God that is determined by obeying in faith.

I pray that this season will become one of understanding faith for you and your congregation.



E V E T T E

*Sermons for Pastors and
Leaders of the Christian
faith!*

The scripture and above material has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible and Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. The opinions of this sermon are from Dr. Evette Hyder-Davis and should be researched further by the recipient. Rightly Dividing sermon series is a copyright of Dr. Evette Hyder-Davis with permission for use but not distribution.

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