



Faith That Pleases God

Series: Hebrews – An Anchor for the Soul

Hebrews 11:5-6

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You know, beloved, the more that I have been preaching through the Letter to the Hebrews, the more I have really come to love Jesus, to love this book, to love and to love this writer even more. I just love the way that the writer builds this sermon on the perfect foundation of Jesus Christ, His glory and majesty, His perfection as our Prophet, Priest, and King, His superiority over everyone and everything, His role as the Mediator of the New Covenant by the pouring out of His blood on our behalf for our full and complete forgiveness of sin, for our growth in holiness, and our standing as children of the Living God. I love the way that the writer challenges the Hebrew Christians along the way not to drift away but to value the great salvation in Christ; not to have an evil, unbelieving heart or to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and to then fall away from Christ. He warns and exhorts the Hebrew Christians and us regarding the dangers of failing to progress in spiritual maturity and fruitfulness, not to cower and grow cold in their confidence and affection for Christ, but to run the race and live the kind of life they did when the first believed the gospel and their eyes and affections were full of Christ. He calls all of us not to be sluggish and unresponsive to the Word of God, but to be **“imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:12, ESV)** And so, to that end, he gives to us this roll call of men and women who lived by faith in God; men and women who were saved by faith and lived a life that was motivated and molded by the faith in God, who demonstrated that their faith was living, active and real; men and women whom we can emulate.

First in line was Abel, the first martyr for his faith in history. Abel's, as we saw, was a faith that speaks and still speaks today. When Abel offered the sacrifice of the firstborn of his flock and the fat portions to God, Abel's faith spoke, testifying that he understood God's judgment of sin and that God's judgment is right and good. When in faith he offered his sacrifice, Abel was testifying that he was a sinner deserving of death. When he brought this sacrifice to God, by faith, Abel was confessing that God is the merciful God who will accept an innocent substitute on the sinner's behalf. And when Abel offered his sacrifice in faith, he

was testifying to his trust in the promise of a coming redeemer, a divine-human substitute and his need for that redeemer. He was confessing his faith in the promise of a coming Savior, a Savior that he desperately needed. Abel's faith was a faith that speaks. And from the first martyr in history, he moves to the first prophet in history – Enoch. And before we go any further, the first thing that I want us to do is to answer the question,

Who Was Enoch?

Well, beloved, everything that we know about Enoch we gather from three passages in the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews draws his example of Enoch from Genesis 5, where the Word of God tells us: ***“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.”*** (Genesis 5:21–24, ESV) Enoch lived in the time before the flood, seven generations from Adam. Moses mentions two things of significance in this short, four-verse summation of his life. First, he had the distinction of being the father of the oldest man who ever lived – Methuselah. But the second thing, that together with Elijah makes him unique, is that Enoch never died. He walked with God, walked in faith with God for 300 years and God took him. That is, he never died. He did not suffer the pain of physical death, but instead God translated him, took him, into heaven. Everyone else that Moses mentions in the line of Adam, through his son Seth, lived so many years and died, but not Enoch. One minute he walked with God on the earth and the next, he was in heaven.

The second place that we read of Enoch is in the book of Jude. In that short letter at the end of the New Testament that deals with false prophets, false believers, people that were using the grace of God as a reason to sin, we read: ***“Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain ... It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.”*** (Jude 11, 14-16, ESV) Not only did Enoch walk with God, he was the first recorded prophet for God and he preached a message of coming judgment, a message that condemned the wickedness and rebellion, the ungodliness and pride of the people who lived in the days before the flood, in the days of

Noah – ungodly people, doing ungodly things, whom Enoch characterized as grumblers, malcontents and loud-mouthed boasters.

You can imagine that kind of message, inspired by God, was not a popular one at all. No one responded in repentance – that’s why there was a flood – and such a ministry could not have been easy at all. He preached this message for 300 years, a lengthy and seemingly fruitless ministry – I say “seemingly fruitless” because God’s Word always accomplishes its purpose, in this case to condemn those who rejected it and leave them without excuse. Yet, Enoch was faithful to preach God’s Word by faith, seeking the approval of God and not of men, living and acting by faith – walking with God, preaching for God, all of his life shaped by His faith in God and His obedience to God’s Word. And the writer of Hebrew tells us about this Enoch, this first prophet for God, because he wants us to see that

Enoch’s Faith Pleased God (5) Look at what he says to us, in Hebrews 11:5, ***“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.”*** (Hebrews 11:5, **ESV**) By faith, Enoch was taken to heaven so that he would not see death, and why? Because he pleased God. Enoch, by his faith, pleased God.

Shouldn’t that be the desire of all of our hearts, the chief desire of every Christian? To please the Lord, to please the One who has redeemed us by the blood of His Son, to please the One that has brought us to life from death, to please the One who is the righteous judge of all and who has given to us forgiveness having judged our sins on the head of His dear Son on the cross, to please the One who has called us into fellowship with Himself and to find our joy and life in Him? Of course it should be.

Sometimes we think that such a thing is impossible, especially in reformed circles. We are so familiar with our sinfulness and imperfection and spiritual infirmity that we think pleasing God is impossible. We hear how all of works are tainted with still indwelling sin and so we think that pleasing God is an impossible task. But that is not how the Apostle Paul saw it. I have talked about this before. He writes, for instance, in 2 Cor. 5:7-10, ***“For we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*** (2 Corinthians 5:7–10, **ESV**) He

reminded the Thessalonians how he had given to them instructions on how **“you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:1, ESV) He told the Colossians how he prayed for them that they **“may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”** (Colossians 1:9–10, ESV) And what pleases God is faith – real faith, living faith, faith that produces fruit in the lives of His people, faith that engages not just the mind, but the heart and the life as well. And the writer of Hebrews offers to us Enoch as an example for the kind of faith that pleases God.

What was it about Enoch’s faith that pleased the Lord? It was just this – that his faith caused him to walk with God. Moses, the writer of Genesis, does not mention faith explicitly but twice he mentions that Enoch “walked with God.” It tells us a great deal about his character and the pattern of this man’s life. His 300-year walk of faith received the commendation of being pleasing to God. That concept, “walking with God” is a beautiful picture of faith. First, walking with God, especially over 300-years, speaks of a steady pace in one direction for the long haul. It is not subject to fits and starts. It is not flashy or spectacular, not openly impressive, but consistent and steadfast. To walk with God implies agreement, being in step with the Lord, walking as He commands in obedience to Him. As Amos spoke, **“Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”** (Amos 3:3, ESV)

This idea of walking with God implies intimacy with God and fellowship with Him, a living relationship with Him. It’s the idea of sharing life together, folding your life into the Lord. Walking with God requires discipline and desire, taking the initiative, choosing to walk with Him when others do not as was the case in Enoch’s day. Enoch resisted the sinful pull of his culture and walked with God when others ignored Him or mocked, criticized, and devalued Enoch’s faith and his faithful preaching. Enoch’s 300 years illustrates this kind of faith. Every day – ordinary days, difficult days, joyful days – are days spent with God, walking with God. Faith precedes and produces the kind of walk with God that so pleases the Lord. This life of faith, for Enoch, was a foretaste of heaven: to be with God, to know His love, to hear His voice, to know the joy of His pleasure – a foretaste that for Enoch ended in the reality of heaven. This walk is born of real faith in God, a life of faith that the writer of Hebrews more fully describes. He gives us

Twin Truths Upon Which Faith Must Be Built (6) Look at how he states these twin truths in verse 6, **“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”** (Hebrews 11:6, ESV) If we would draw near to God, if we would be pleasing to God, we must **believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

First, he says, we must believe that God exists or that He is. Now the writer of Hebrews is saying more than that we must just believe in a higher power, or believe in the “big man upstairs,” or any of the other empty ways in which people speak of God in our day. It is more than simply believing that there is a God who has created all things. It is not a faith in generic deity but in the One True God who as revealed Himself in the Bible. The faith of a Mormon is not pleasing to God no matter how many miles he peddles or missions he goes on. The faith of a Jehovah’s Witness is not pleasing to God no matter how many Watchtowers he hands out or doors he knocks on. The faith of a Muslim is not pleasing to God no matter how many pilgrimages he makes, or women he oppresses, or terrorist acts he commits. God is not pleased with faith in a god of your own making or a god of your own reasoning. The faith that pleases God is a faith that believes in the God who is, as He has revealed Himself, and that the Biblical God alone is God alone. And that is why we must be a people of the Book. This Bible alone reveals who God really is and the God in whom we must place our trust.

We must believe in the God who has revealed Himself in the Word of God as the God of love and wrath, of justice and of mercy, the God of kindness and of judgment, the God of Law and Grace, the God of forgiveness and vengeance, the God of righteousness, holiness, compassion, faithfulness, and the God who has finally and fully, in all of His glory, revealed Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe that God is exactly the way He has revealed Himself in the Word of God and that testimony of His Son Jesus Christ is true: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6, ESV)

The second truth, upon which faith must be built, is this: we must **believe... that he rewards those who seek him.** What you seek is a revealer of what you really value. One man seeks money, another fame, another security, another ease, another pleasure, but the man with faith seeks after God because he believes that God rewards those who seek Him. What is this great reward and why do we seek it? Listen to what Charles Spurgeon says about this:

“We are sure that, somehow or other, it will be to our highest benefit to honor the Lord and trust Him. Albeit we deserve nothing at His hands but wrath, yet we perceive from the Gospel that if we seek Him through His Son, we shall be so well-pleasing to Him as to get a reward from His hands. This must be of Divine Grace—Free, Sovereign Grace! And what a reward it is! Free pardon, graciously bestowed. A change of heart, graciously worked. Perseverance, graciously maintained. Comfort, graciously poured in, and privilege, graciously awarded. The reward of godliness, even in this world, is immeasurable—and in the world to come it is infinite.” And Spurgeon is right, but ultimately, the greatest reward of all is God Himself in whom all of these blessings are found. The great reward of Enoch’s faith was God Himself. **Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.** The writer of Hebrews, and God through him, wanted these Hebrew Christians and us to see and to believe that living and active faith in God gives the reward, God Himself, that outweighs anything that might tempt us to disobey or depart and fall away from Him. That is the whole point. Enoch could not be dissuaded from walking with God.

It is this kind of faith that pleases God because it prizes God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Hasn’t that been the whole focus of the writer of Hebrews throughout this whole letter, that we would prize Christ? It is this kind of faith, that pleases God, faith that prizes Christ above all other prizes, that value Christ and His Lordship over everything else, that believes that God rewards a surrendered and trusting heart. It is this kind of faith that draws near to God in Christ, that literally “beats a path to God.” That’s what the words “draw near” mean. When you truly believe in God as He is revealed in the Word and you believe that He rewards those who seek Him, you will “beat a path to God.”

The One whom God, by His Holy Spirit, has drawn to faith in Him through Jesus Christ will seek Him, will beat a path to Him, first, by calling upon the name of the Lord, by calling upon Jesus Christ for salvation, and then, afterward, will seek him by making Him the One for whom he lives. It will be the aim of His life to seek God by faith and it that kind of seeking that pleases God. There is no such thing as passive faith.

And, pleasing God by faith begins in the heart. It is not a matter of ritual or religious duty – it begins in the heart. Wasn’t that the great complaint against the Pharisees in Jesus’ day and the Israelites in Isaiah’s day – the lack of heart? Jesus said in Mark 7:6-8, **“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “ ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of**

men.’ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.’” (Mark 7:6–8, ESV) Pleasing God, pleasing faith begins in the heart and God sees it. He sees the reality or hypocrisy of faith. God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

It is faith that pleases God – real, living, active faith. **“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6, ESV)** When we read these words, when we see the example of Enoch, the first prophet, it draws a sharp distinction between a head faith and a heart faith, an intellectual faith and a saving faith, a dead faith and a living faith – what the writer of Hebrews is illustrating in this entire chapter.

What This Meant for the Hebrew Christians and What it Means for Us

1) Without faith it is impossible to please God and we know why. The man without faith is a dead man and God is the God of the living not the dead. It is only by faith that we live, that we can recognize God, approach Him, speak to Him, hear Him, know His presence and be delighted in Him and know His pleasure. The writer of Hebrews longed for his readers to have a faith that was pleasing to God and so to prize the Lord and His Christ. Prizing Christ demands death to prizing anything more than Him. Jesus put the death nail in the trying to serve two masters at the same time. Speaking of money, but by extension anything that would usurp the proper place of Christ in our hearts, He said, **““No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” (Matthew 6:24, ESV)** The Hebrews who were facing such difficult persecution and we, who suffer the more subtle seduction of the world, need to prize Christ more highly than anything else. That is at the core of living faith.

2) God is pleased with those who trust in Him and continue to trust in Him come what may. The one that believes in the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture and surrenders himself to all that God commands is the man or woman who pleases Him. The one who by his or her faith, trusts in God’s Word, seeks to obey Him, who live for His glory, who live for his approval and not the approval of the world, that is the one who pleases God. To live to please men is worthless work. To be tossed to and fro by the whims and winds of others is

bondage. To follow the whims of this world, through coercion or seduction, is the worst kind of slavery. Just as He delivered Enoch from the darkness of the world in which he lived, Colossians 1:13 says, **“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,” (Colossians 1:13, ESV)** Live like it.

3) It is those who please God by faith that will have the reward... and they will have it. As God said to Abraham, so he speaks to us, “Fear not, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward.” Loving faith in Him, regardless of the cost here, will not go unrewarded.

4) Make it the pattern of your life to keep coming to Him, keep drawing near, keep beating a path to God, for it is a small step indeed from close communion with God on earth to perfect communion with Him in heaven.

Beloved, Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God. He pleased Him by faith. What other testimony could we desire? Can you now say you walk with God by a living faith and have the testimony that you please Him? If not, then come to Him and plead for His grace and He will not cast you away. Turn from your sins and especially your sin of devaluing the Prize of Heaven, Jesus Christ. Believe on Him for salvation right now. Treasure and trust Him to be the only one who has paid your debt of sin that you owed to God and rest in His death and work on Calvary’s cross. Long for Him more than a starving man craves food; more than a thirsty man seeks water. Desire Him above fame or men’s applause. Cherish Him far more than wealth.

You may say, “I’m a believer. I have trusted in Christ.” Ok, do you please Him by faith? In my own life I have seen that there are some things I can do by faith and some things that I can’t. I can’t lie, be bitter, practice sexual immorality, grumble, complain, unrighteously judge, be sinfully angry, be jealous, be greedy, be materialistic, be unforgiving, compromise the truth, harden myself to the Word of God, justify sin, or fall away from Christ by faith.

But you know what I can do, what all of us can do by faith? I can love Christ, obey His word, worship Him in spirit and in truth, love my brothers and sisters in Christ, lay down my rights and count others as more important than myself, serve the flock of God, be a good friend, speak the truth in love, confess sin, ask forgiveness, pray, be faith and stand on the truth,

invite people to church, preach the gospel, and hold fast to Jesus by faith. That's what we can do by faith.

Faith pleases God. And if you have faith you will have fellowship with the Creator of all you can and cannot see. Believe in Him and walk with Him, for faith is what pleases God, the kind of faith that prizes Him above all other prizes. That was Enoch's testimony. May it be our own.

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