

FAITH AND PLEASING GOD

INTRODUCTION

- A.** Pleasing God is the greatest privilege a human being on earth can have.
- 1.** There is a way this can be done on earth but not in Heaven.
 - 2.** In a word: by faith.
 - a.** There will be no faith in Heaven, that is, as defined by Hebrews 11:1: 'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.'
 - b.** Only on earth can we believe God without the empirical evidence.
 - (1)** No faith will be required in Heaven.
 - (2)** It is only possible here below.
 - 3.** Recall our definition of faith: believing God.
- B.** Believing God is pleasing God.
- 1.** Pleasing God (def.): making him happy, giving him pleasure; satisfying him.
 - a.** The blood of Jesus satisfies the Divine Justice.
 - b.** Once we transfer our trust from our good works to what Jesus has done for us we may know that we have pleased God. This is called saving faith.
 - 2.** Achieving faith is pleasing God by believing him in difficult circumstances.
 - a.** This is what we can do now which we cannot do in Heaven.
 - b.** There will be no difficult circumstances in Heaven. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' Rev. 21:4.
 - c.** A reward which comes at the Judgement Seat of Christ will be the result of pleasing God by achieving faith.
 - (1)** Saving faith assures us of Heaven but not necessarily a reward in Heaven. 'No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that

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after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.' 1 Cor. 9:27.

- (2)** Achieving faith – pleasing God in difficult circumstances – is honoured at the Judgement Seat of Christ. 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.' 2 Cor. 5:10.

C. Hebrews 11 contains two references to pleasing God by faith.

- 1.** A person: Enoch. 'By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.' Heb. 11:5.
- 2.** A principle: diligent faith. '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.' Heb. 11:6.

D. Why is this lesson important?

- 1.** It is a further elaboration on the first lesson in this series in which we saw the distinction between saving faith and achieving faith.
 - a.** This is a distinction never to be underestimated.
 - b.** Many sincere Christians confuse the two and consequently think you can lose your salvation (or new birth) if you don't have achieving faith.
 - (1)** Saving faith *saves*: Heaven is assured.
 - (2)** Achieving faith *achieves*: not only a reward in Heaven but the witness here below that we please God.
- 2.** It shows how an individual can know that he or she pleases God.
 - a.** We do not have to wait until we get to Heaven to learn that we please God.
 - b.** What Enoch did we too can do, without being taken to glory before everybody else.
- 3.** It shows that unbelief displeases God.
 - a.** A Christian can temporarily give in to unbelief.

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- b.** Whenever that happens we may be sure we do not please God; we displease him indeed.
- 4.** We will have a deeper look at the kind of faith that pleases God – which is two-fold:
 - a.** First, believing ‘that he exists’.
 - b.** Second, that he ‘rewards those who earnestly seek him.’
- 5.** This lesson should stimulate us to please God more than ever.
 - a.** This will come by a greater faith.
 - b.** This kind of faith is born in difficult circumstances in which we believe God *all the more* - and don’t give up!

I ENOCH

- A.** Certain facts about him:
 - 1.** His father Jared outlived Enoch by 435 years.
 - 2.** His son Methuselah became the oldest man in human history, living 969 years.
 - 3.** He ‘walked with God’ for 300 years, something that seems to have started at age 65. Gen. 5:22.
 - 4.** He had other sons and daughters as well as Methuselah.
 - 5.** At the age of 365 he disappeared from the earth. ‘He was no more, for God took him away.’ Gen. 5:24.
 - 6.** During his lifetime he prophesied of the Second Coming of Christ. Jude 14.
 - 7.** The writer of Hebrews says that Enoch achieved what he did ‘by faith’. Heb. 11:5.
 - 8.** He became a legendary figure in Israel; he is referred to in the Apocrypha (Wisdom of Solomon 4:10 and Ecclesiasticus 44:6), and Jude quotes from the Book of Enoch 1:9.
 - 9.** He pleased God.
- B.** The key to all Enoch achieved was his faith.

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- 1.** If faith is believing God, what had God said to Enoch that he believed?
Answer: that he would not die.
 - a.** AV: 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.'
 - b.** NIV: 'By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he should not experience death.'

- 2.** In order for this verse to be true it follows that Enoch had been given a promise. . . which he believed.
 - a.** He could not have merely said to himself, 'Today I am going to believe myself to be translated to Heaven without dying.' No.
 - b.** His faith was preceded by a word from God – that he would not die – which he actually believed!
 - (1)** There was no precedent for this.
 - (2)** What pleased God: Enoch believed God.
 - c.** God promised Enoch he would not die; otherwise this verse makes no sense.
 - (1)** Enoch was not translated in order to believe.
 - (2)** He believed this first – without any evidence save God's promise to him that he would not die.

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- 1.** We are told that this was true before his translation.
 - a.** 'Before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.'
 - b.** AV: 'Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.'

- 2.** Enoch knew that he pleased God.
 - a.** The writer does not say that everybody else knew this; how could they know in any case?
 - b.** He had the testimony – witness – that he pleased God.
 - (1)** 'Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out

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to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.' 1 John 5:10.

(2) This is the testimony (or witness) of the Spirit. 'We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.' Acts 5:32.

3. There is no greater witness on earth.

a. It does not say that Enoch pleased people.

b. It does not say that Enoch pleased his friends.

c. He pleased God – and knew it.

(1) This meant more to him than anything.

(2) This is how he got his joy – walking with God and knowing he pleased God.

D. Enoch was a product of what was almost certainly the first Great Awakening.

1. The world's first Great Awakening is recorded in Genesis 4:26: 'At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.'

2. Enoch was a product of this phenomenon.

a. This created an atmosphere that led to Enoch's walk with God; he had a thirst for God.

b. We can only pray for an awakening in our own day that will cause a longing for more of God which will hopefully produce many Enochs.

3. Enoch was a testimony to people far better known at the time: Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-Cain. Genesis 4:20-22.

a. They were Cain's heirs and famous then.

(1) Jabal might be called the father of the construction business.

(2) Jubal might be called the father of music.

(3) Tubal-Cain might be called the father of the hardware business.

b. These were examples of 'common grace' of their day.

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- (1) Common grace: 'special grace in nature' (Calvin).
 - (2) It means giftedness but not necessarily salvation.
 - (3) There is no evidence that these three men were believers.
4. The man even better known than was also called Enoch, Cain's son; a city was named after him. Gen. 4:17.
 5. But the Enoch who pleased God is the one remembered for all time.

II THE KIND OF FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD: DILIGENT FAITH

'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.' Heb. 11:6.

A. Why is it impossible to please God without faith?

1. Faith is our response to God's word.
 - a. Faith – believing God – presupposes that God has spoken.
 - b. Believing God is believing his word, what he has said.
 - c. God's word is his integrity put on the line.
 - d. He wants us to believe in his integrity.
 - e. We do this by faith.
 - (1) He has magnified his word above all his name. Ps. 138:2 (AV).
 - (2) Faith is trusting that word.
2. Faith is the work of God – the Holy Spirit.
 - a. We could not believe had not God enabled us to do so.
 - b. We need the Spirit in order to believe God.
 - c. God supplies the ability to believe.
 - (1) This is why faith is a gift of God. 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.' Eph. 2:8.
 - (2) We therefore can take no credit for believing.

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- 3.** The flesh cannot believe, only miss the mark.
- a.** Flesh (def.): our fallen nature.
 - b.** This means we cannot do anything, even accidentally, that pleases God.
 - (1)** This is why people think they can be saved by good works.
 - (2)** By nature we all try to offer God the best of our hands – as Cain did.

‘Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.’

B. The faith that pleases God is two-fold.

- 1.** Believing that he exists. AV: that he ‘is’; that he is there.
- a.** The awareness that God ‘is’ may come to man as a shock, even though we know he is there. Rom. 1:21.
 - b.** Some theologians speak of the ‘ontological shock’ – why is there ‘something’ and not ‘nothing’?
 - (1)** Ontology is the philosophy of being.
 - (2)** It is an ontological shock when I am aware that I *am*, that I have being.
 - c.** The greater shock is the *theological* shock – that God is, that he is Creator and that I have sinned against him.
 - d.** Believing that God is, however, is not enough.
 - (1)** After all, the devil believes that too. ‘You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder.’ James 2:19.
 - (2)** Therefore believing that God exists only matches the devil’s faith.
 - c.** And yet believing that he is there is still essential.
 - (1)** Sometimes a Christian can fall into unbelief.
 - (2)** Such a person must rise above this if he or she is to please God.

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- (3) Believing that God exists is a beginning and a necessary one.
2. That God rewards those who diligently seek him.
- a. Note: 'and'.
- (1) It is essential but not enough to believe God is there.
- (2) There is more: 'And that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.'
- b. The concept of reward, sadly, puts some people off.
- (1) They want to believe they seek God without any concept of being rewarded for doing so.
- (2) This is nonsense; why else would we seek God if there would be no positive benefit – or reward (or whatever you may wish to call it)?
- c. The idea of reward is a prominent New Testament teaching.
- (1) It is not something one earns prior to faith; we are not saved by works but by faith alone. Eph. 2:8-9.
- (2) It is what is promised to believers only:
- (a) 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.' Matt. 5:11-12.
- (b) 'Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.' Matt. 10:41-42.
- (c) 'If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.' 1 Cor. 3:14.

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(d) 'No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.' 1 Cor. 9:27.

(e) '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.' Heb. 11:26.

e. The rewarding that is promised in Hebrews 11:6 however is not limited to what comes at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

(1) It certainly points to that.

(2) It mainly means God rewarding us in this life.

C. How God rewards:

1. Help.

a. When tempted. Heb. 2:18.

b. In time of need. Heb. 4:16.

2. Hearing God's voice. Heb. 3:7.

a. Being hard of hearing spiritually is a danger sign. Heb. 5:11.

b. When we can no longer hear God's voice we can no longer be renewed to repentance. Heb. 6:6.

3. Entering God's rest. Heb. 4:1-11.

a. This is the main thing God wants us to inherit, what the Epistle to the Hebrews is largely about.

b. It is called by other names.

(1) The oath. Heb. 6:9-20.

(2) Confidence being rewarded by the Lord stepping in. Heb. 10:34.

c. The context of Hebrews 11:6 is with particular reference to God showing up to discouraged Christians.

(1) 'So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done

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the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.'" Heb. 10:35-38.

(2) This is what led to Hebrews 11 in the first place, with Hebrews 11:6 focussing on the real concern.

4. Apart from Hebrews, we may add:

- b** A greater anointing. 'If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!' Luke 11:13.
- b.** Anything that comes under the category of answered prayer.

D. Seeking God.

1. Seeking means time and effort.

- a.** One seeks because they expect it to take time.
- b.** You do not seek if you already know where what you are looking for is; you just go get!
- c.** Seeking implies a search that may or may not result in success.

2. But the Bible tells us such seeking is not in vain.

- a.** 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.' Jer. 29:13. Cf. Deut. 4:29.
- b.** Jesus said, 'So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.' Luke 11:9-10.
- c.** Hence Hebrews 11:6: God rewards those who earnestly seek him.

E. Diligent faith: earnestness in all circumstances. Not giving up:

- 1.** In prayer. Luke 18:1-8.
- 2.** In extreme suffering. Job 13:15.
- 3.** When challenged to compromise. Daniel 3:17-18; 6:10.

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4. When God hides his face. Psalm 13.
5. When you stand alone. 2 Tim. 4:16.
6. When it is 'out of season'. 2 Tim. 4:2.
7. When almost in despair. 2 Cor. 1:8-9.
8. When people are judging you. 1 Cor. 4:3.
9. When friendship turns sour. Gal. 4:15-16.
10. When under financial pressure. Phil. 4:12-19.

CONCLUSION

- A.** This kind of faith pleases God.
 1. It is an opportunity we will not always have.
 2. Pleasing God by faith will not be possible:
 - a. After we die.
 - b. When we are in Heaven.
- B.** God pleases us:
 1. When he answers prayer.
 2. When he showers us with blessing.
 3. When we feel his presence.
- C.** We please God when:
 1. He doesn't answer prayer – and we still believe him.
 2. He doesn't shower us with blessing – and we still seek him.
 3. We don't feel his presence – and we maintain a daily seeking of his face.
- D.** It's not for nothing!
 1. God will step in.

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2. The reason we believe God will reward us at the end of the day is because he does!
3. When? In time of need. Heb. 4:16.

'Never too early,
never too late;
always just on time.'