

Pleasing Faith

(Hebrews 11:4-6)

Yearly Theme: *“Love Does...”*

Series Title: *Substance of Faith*

December 8th, 2019

Something to think about:

As we continue our quest to understand how love never loses faith, we read the next few verses of Hebrews 11 to broaden our perspective. Let’s take a look...

Hebrews 11:4-6 (NLT)

⁴ *It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.*

⁵ *It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God.* ⁶ *And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*

Back in June we looked at the story of Cain and Abel and the fact that “love is not jealous.” What we didn’t look at then, we look at now, and that is the fact that Abel brought God a gift out of faith in God, and Cain did not. It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God because he was offering God his very best and not just his leftovers.

Another character from the Old Testament that is mentioned in this passage is Enoch. There are a couple of men named Enoch in the Old Testament (specifically in the book of Genesis), but they are very opposite in nature. There was a man named Enoch in Genesis 4 that was a son of Cain that became a very wicked man. However, the other man named Enoch in the book of Genesis 5 was the father of Methuselah (the oldest man in the Bible). All we know about Methuselah’s father, Enoch, was that he walked in close fellowship with God and that one day he disappeared because God took him. The writer of Hebrews tells us that he was taken up *because* he was known as “a person who pleased God.”

And, this is the point we turn to today; the point we will be focusing on as described in our key point this morning:

Key Point: *“It is impossible to please God without faith.”*

In order to understand this passage better, there are some crucial questions that we need to ask, and here they are:

1. How does one please God?

The Greek word used here for “please,” or “pleased” can be translated as “to gratify entirely.”¹

2. How does one believe that God exists?

The Greek word used here for “believe” can be translated as “to have faith,” or “to be committed to.”²

3. How does one sincerely seek God?

The Greek word used here for “sincerely” can actually be translated as “to search out, to investigate, or to diligently seek.”³

Something to take home:

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And, in order to do this, we must believe that God exists and sincerely seek Him throughout our lives.

Do you believe in God? Do you love Him with all your heart? Are you seeking Him diligently, with all your heart? Are you listening for His voice?

Again, God doesn’t try and complicate things for us. He makes things simple. It’s us who makes things hard. The problem is the human heart; if it’s not completely surrendered to God, there is a cycle of behavior that results in a lack of commitment to God. When this happens, we drift out to sea without an anchor to keep us from being tossed about by the wind and waves of doubt and confusion.

Thought it’s not complicated, it *is* hard to be faithful to God. The problem lies in the nature of sin and the fallen world in which we live. This is why we need a Savior. Jesus’ became the one who did perfectly what we could not. He appeased God and pleased God by taking our sins upon Himself, thus, when we believe in Jesus and surrender our lives to Him completely, God is pleased with us because of our faith in Him.

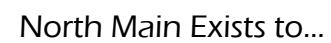
Again, it’s important to remember...

Key Point: *“It is impossible to please God without faith.”*

¹ Strong’s Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

[illegible]

Know Christ intimately,
Grow in Christ continually, and,
Go for Christ daily;

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... evidence of things not seen.

(HEBREWS 11)

Pleasing Faith
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KICK STARTERS:

- ⇒ What does it mean to be "pleasing" to someone?
- ⇒ Describe a time when you were able to please someone in your life...

SCRIPTURE: (Before studying this material, consider listening to the corresponding message online at: http://www.northmaincog.org/media/sermon-media)

Hebrews 11:4-6 (NLT)

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.
5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

- 1. In a couple sentences, describe this passage of Scripture:
- 2. Read Genesis 4:1-16. What made Abel's offering more pleasing to God than Cain's?
- 3. From the Genesis account of the Cain and Abel narrative, we see that Cain brought "some" of his crops as an offering to the LORD while Abel brought the first and the best of the lambs from his flock. Why does God care what we bring to Him (or, better yet, how we bring it to Him)?

- 4. What are some things that people have done for you that have been pleasing to you? Why were you pleased?
- 5. Considering Abel's offering was pleasing to God (the best he had to offer, and not just merely something), how is this an example of his faith?
- 6. In verse 6, the writer of Hebrews explains that "it is impossible to please God without faith." Why is it impossible to please God without faith?
- 6. In the second half of verse 6, the writer of Hebrews states that, "Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek him." How does a person "sincerely" seek God?
- 7. What rewards come from sincerely seeking God?
- 8. Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will happen and it's the evidence of things we cannot see, and without faith it's impossible to please God. In Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah speaks on behalf of God saying, "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." Faith in God is not merely accepting/believing that He is real, but it's acting on that faith by following and obeying His teaching and commands. With this in mind, how are you living out your faith? Would you say that because of your faith you are pleasing to God? Why, or why not? Is there anything that needs to change in your life?

SELF-EVALUATION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ GOD DOESN'T COMPLICATE THINGS FOR US. All too often we complicate things for ourselves. He makes things simple. It's us who makes things hard. The problem is the human heart; if it's not completely surrendered to God, there is a cycle of behavior that results in a lack of commitment to God. When this happens, we drift out to sea without an anchor to keep us from being tossed about by the wind and waves of doubt and confusion.
- ⇒ THOUGHT IT'S NOT COMPLICATED, it is hard to be faithful to God. The problem lies in the nature of sin and the fallen world in which we live. This is why we need a Savior. Jesus' became the one who did perfectly what we could not. He appeased God and pleased God by taking our sins upon Himself, thus, when we believe in Jesus and surrender our lives to Him completely, God is pleased with us because of our faith in Him.
- ⇒ MEMORY VERSES: Hebrews 11:6 and Jeremiah 29:13.