

Faith That Pleases God

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.

The essence of this bible study expression is to know what and how to do what pleases God. What does it mean to please someone, or God per se? The expression “to please” is an intransitive verb. In grammar, an intransitive verb does not allow a direct object. This is distinct from a transitive verb, which takes one or more objects. Spiritually, it is best to have faith that is transitive, so that the direct object of our faith, is God himself¹. With that, the definition of “to please” is...

1. *To give enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction to; make glad or contented.*
2. *To be the will or desire of.*
3. *To give satisfaction or pleasure; be agreeable.*

Our faith is to be such that all we know, believe and trust in God is so exemplary that God takes delight in rewarding us. Now, the question is begged of this lesson, what is this type faith and how do we get it. The context of this study is couched within the one chapter in the bible that is known as the hall of fame of faith. We will begin with 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*” then broaden the study to other elements within Hebrews 11 and related biblical passages to define and obtain the faith that pleases God.

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Exposition of Hebrews 11:6¹

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

But without faith it is impossible to please him. Without confidence in God--in his fidelity, his truth, his wisdom, his promises. And this is as true in other things as ill religion. It is impossible for a child to please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to please her husband, or a husband a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery. We cannot be pleased with a professed friend unless he has such confidence in us as to believe our declarations and promises. The same thing is true of God. He cannot be pleased with the man who has no confidence in him; who doubts the truth of his declarations and promises; who does not believe that his ways are right, or that he is qualified for universal empire. The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, and partners in life, and friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

For he that cometh to God. In any way--as a worshipper. This is alike required in public worship, in the family, and in secret devotion.

¹ Albert Barnes' New Testament Commentary on Hebrews 11:6

Must believe that he is. That God exists. This is the first thing required in worship. Evidently we cannot come to him in an acceptable manner if we doubt his existence. We do not see him, but we must believe that he is; we cannot form in our mind a correct image of God, but this should not prevent a conviction that there is such a Being. But the declaration here implies more than that there should be a general persuasion of the truth that there is a God. It is necessary that we have this belief in lively exercise in the act of drawing near to him, and that we should realize that we are actually in the presence of the all-seeing JEHOVAH.

And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This is equally necessary as the belief that he exists. If we could not believe that God would hear and answer our prayers, there could be no encouragement to call upon him. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God--for the apostle makes no affirmation on that point; but that it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.

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The Essence of Faith...

FAITH—Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (*Phil. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:13*). Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and therefore worthy of trust. It admits of many degrees up to full assurance of faith, in accordance with the evidence on which it rests.

Faith is the result of teaching (*Rom. 10:14–17*). Knowledge is an essential element in all faith, and is sometimes spoken of as an equivalent to faith (*John 10:38; 1 John 2:3*). Yet the two are distinguished in this respect, that faith includes in it assent, which is an act of the will in addition to the act of the understanding. Assent to the truth is of the essence of faith, and the ultimate ground on which our assent to any revealed truth rests is the veracity of God.

Historical faith is the apprehension of and assent to certain statements which are regarded as mere facts of history. Temporary faith is that state of mind which is awakened in men by the exhibition of the truth and by the influence of religious sympathy, or by what is sometimes styled the common operation of the Holy Spirit. Saving faith is so called because it has eternal life inseparably connected with it. It cannot be better defined than in the words of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism: "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."

The object of saving faith is the whole revealed Word of God. Faith accepts and believes it as the very truth most sure. But the special act of faith which unites to Christ has as its object the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 7:38; Acts 16:31*). This is the specific act of faith by which a sinner is justified before God (*Rom. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9; John 3:16–36; Acts 10:43; 16:31*). In this act of faith the believer appropriates and rests on Christ alone as Mediator in all his offices.

This assent to or belief in the truth received upon the divine testimony has always associated with it a deep sense of sin, a distinct view of Christ, a consenting will, and a loving heart, together with a reliance on, a trusting in, or resting in Christ. It is that state of mind in which a poor sinner, conscious of his sin, flees from his guilty self to Christ his Saviour, and rolls over the burden of all his sins on him. It consists chiefly, not in the assent given to the testimony of God in his Word, but in embracing with fiducial reliance and trust the one and only Saviour whom God reveals. This

trust and reliance is of the essence of faith. By faith the believer directly and immediately appropriates Christ as his own. Faith in its direct act makes Christ ours. It is not a work which God graciously accepts instead of perfect obedience, but is only the hand by which we take hold of the person and work of our Redeemer as the only ground of our salvation.

Saving faith is a moral act, as it proceeds from a renewed will, and a renewed will is necessary to believing assent to the truth of God (*1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4*). Faith, therefore, has its seat in the moral part of our nature fully as much as in the intellectual. The mind must first be enlightened by divine teaching (*John 6:44; Acts 13:48; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:17, 18*) before it can discern the things of the Spirit. Faith is necessary to our salvation (*Mark 16:16*), not because there is any merit in it, but simply because it is the sinner's taking the place assigned him by God, his falling in with what God is doing.

The warrant or ground of faith is the divine testimony, not the reasonableness of what God says, but the simple fact that he says it. Faith rests immediately on, "Thus saith the Lord." But in order to this faith the veracity, sincerity, and truth of God must be owned and appreciated, together with his unchangeableness. God's word encourages and emboldens the sinner personally to transact with Christ as God's gift, to close with him, embrace him, give himself to Christ, and take Christ as his. That word comes with power, for it is the word of God who has revealed himself in his works, and especially in the cross. God is to be believed for his word's sake, but also for his name's sake.

Faith in Christ secures for the believer freedom from condemnation, or justification before God; a participation in the life that is in Christ, the divine life (*John 14:19; Rom. 6:4–10; Eph. 4:15, 16*, etc.); "peace with God" (*Rom. 5:1*); and sanctification (*Acts 26:18; Gal. 5:6; Acts 15:9*).

All who thus believe in Christ will certainly be saved (*John 6:37, 40; 10:27, 28; Rom. 8:1*).

The faith=the gospel (*Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9; Jude 1:3*).²

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In the next section of our lesson on faith, we will explore the broader biblical perspectives on faith.

² Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (pp. 250–251). New York: Harper & Brothers.