

The Importance of Faith • Hebrews 11:5-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Tabloids*

1. You've seen them! They sit in racks just above the conveyor belt on which you load your groceries.
2. They're *tabloids* – sensationalistic newspapers with outrageous headlines meant to provoke you into taking one and slapping down a buck-fifty!
3. You just *have* to read the articles with headlines like these –
 - *Dinosaurs Honked Like Buicks*
 - *Cow Mattresses Help Cows Produce More Milk*
 - *Mom On Diet Of Only Chicken, Lays Huge Egg*
 - *WWII Bomber Found On The Moon*
 - *Woman Gives Birth To 2 Year Old Baby: Child Walks & Talks In 3 Days*
 - *Adam & Eve's Bones Found In Asia: Eve Was A Space Alien*
4. Now, what's amazing is that many people will read and believe this nonsense.
 - a. they'll engage their friends in conversation and say,
 - b. "You'll never believe what I read, but Eve was from outer space!"
5. They put great stock in the tabloids articles, but they neglect the Bible and refuse to put any credence in the *evidence* concerning God and Jesus Christ.

B. *Hebrews 11*

1. We're looking at the subject of *faith* today.
2. And as we do, we come to Hebrews 11 – often referred to as the Bible's *Hall of Faith and Fame*.
3. The writer of Hebrews is encouraging his readers to *hold fast* to their faith in Christ.
4. He encourages them by reminding them of all those in Scripture whom they held in such high esteem – their heroes!
5. He points out that in each and every one of their cases, what made them special, what caused them to be the standouts they were was

their *persevering faith* in God.

6. In vs. 5 & 6, he mentions a rather obscure and mysterious hero of faith – a man named Enoch.

II. TEXT

A. V. 5

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

1. The story of Enoch is found in Genesis 5:21-24
 - a. he lived before the Flood and so was one of those who lived far longer than the life-span of modern man
 - b. we read that he was 65 years old before he had his first child, Methuselah, who ended up being the oldest man in history at 969 years
 - c. after having Methuselah, Enoch lived another 300 years; then we read these mysterious words in v. 24 -

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

2. Enoch lived at a period of time marked by widespread rebellion against God.
 - a. the earth had become utterly corrupt.
 - b. in fact, so wicked was the world that God determined there was only *one* solution;
 - c. start over again - so He sent the flood!
3. Despite the corruption of his time, Enoch walked with God!
4. Jude tells us Enoch stood boldly against the evil of the times and warned his peers that judgment was coming.
5. If you know anything about what the Bible says about the days prior to the Flood, you know that it was a time marked by gross violence and the most heinous kinds of sin.
6. It had to be inordinately tough to maintain faith in God during that time – but Enoch did!
7. In fact, his faith rose to a level *unheard of* in history.
 - a. the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers that Genesis says

- Enoch was so close to God –
- b. that he walked with Him in such profound faith,
 - c. that one day when Enoch was 365 years old, God in effect said, “Enoch, you please Me so much, I’m going to reward you with your heart’s desire.”
 - d. and he just disappeared – instantly transported to heaven!
 - e. Enoch never saw death – he was changed, translated from mortal to immortal.
 - f. many Bible scholars and teachers see the translation of Enoch as being a picture of the Rapture of the Church.
8. The writer of Hebrews wants to encourage his readers to maintain their faith in Christ, so he points out that what pleased God and moved Him to work so dramatically on Enoch’s behalf was Enoch’s faith in God.
9. That faith was made evident in his life in the fact that he “walked with God,” as it says in Genesis 5:24

B. Walking Together

1. Think about what it takes for two to walk together.
2. As it says in Amos 3:3 – “can two walk together *unless* they be agreed?”
3. For two to walk together they must be agreed about three things –
 - a. they must agree on the *destination* or *place*
 - b. the *path*
 - c. & the *pace*
4. First, they must agree on the *destination* – what *place* are they going?
 - a. husbands and wives know that the paths at the Outlet Mall to Off 5th and the Black & Decker store aren’t the same!
 - b. you cannot walk *together* if you’re headed to different destinations
 - c. all creation was brought into existence for God’s glory and Enoch could think of nothing greater than to give glory to God in all he said and did.
 - d. his destination, his goal, his very reason for living and breathing was that God would be blessed.
 - e. God’s pleasure was so critical, so crucial to his very being that Enoch ached to be found in the place of *uninterrupted* blessing

- to God.
5. Second, for two to walk together, they must take the same *path*.
 - a. again; a couple can both be headed for the same shoe-store but they can take different routes.
 - b. if they do, they don't walk together
 - c. Enoch's destination was the glory and pleasure of God, but he didn't seek his *own* route there.
 - d. he knew that God has already proscribed the route that we must come to Him – by faith as opposed to works
 - e. so Enoch believed God totally and completely!
 - f. he cast himself in complete dependence on God and looked to nothing within himself as worthy of God's blessing.
 - g. for Enoch, it was all and only about the goodness of God.
 6. And third, for two to walk together, they must go at the same *pace*.
 - a. I've noticed when my wife and I take our daughter to the mall that I'm usually several steps ahead of them.
 - b. my daughter likes to stop and look at things while I'm on a mission.
 - c. I know where I want to go – everything else is a diversion.
 - d. Lynn hangs back to keep an eye on Karesse and so I'm usually a few yards ahead of them till it dawns on me that I need to slow down.
 - e. I stop, wait till they catch up, then fall into step with them.
 - f. Enoch was in step with God.
 - 1) he not only aimed his life at the glory of God
 - 2) and determined to live the way God had commanded
 - 3) he determined to wait on God for His direction, not just in the big choices of life, but in the little daily and mundane things as well.
 7. And after 365 years of walking with God, Enoch's faith became so in tune with Him that God looked at him and said, "Enoch has *nothing* left to learn. His faith is *complete*. There's nothing left but to fulfill his hope and desire and reward him with what he wants."

C. V. 6

1. Using Enoch's story, the writer moves to point out some important lessons about faith . . .

6 But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

2. Enoch stands as a supreme example of what pleases God.
 - a. it's hard to imagine any commendation greater than that God would in effect say,
 - b. "Continued life on earth serves no purpose whatsoever for this person."
 - c. "All that's left for him or her is to enter the thing they were created for in the first place - My presence in heaven."
3. So, using Enoch as the example – the writer draws this conclusion – what God is looking for in us is faith!
4. If we were created for God's glory and pleasure – and we were – then our main preoccupation ought to be – What pleases God? What brings Him glory?
5. The answer is – FAITH!
6. In fact, without faith, it's just not possible to please God!
7. Notice this carefully:
 - a. is it merely *difficult* to please God apart from faith?
 - b. no – it's IMPOSSIBLE!
 - c. no matter what we do, if it's not motivated by faith in God, if faith is not mixed with it, it's an absolute waste of time and effort, as far as pleasing God is concerned.

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8. The writer then proceeds to qualify what he means by faith; what does God-pleasing faith believe in?
 9. First of all – it believes that God IS – that He exists.
 - a. this is the first step on the road of faith
 - b. but please note that it isn't mere faith in some kind of a cosmic force, some general acceptance of a supreme being that's commended here.
 - c. if that were the case then there would be no distinction between Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and ten-thousand folk-religions
 - d. the writer said,

. . . he who comes to God must believe that He is,

- e. meaning God – the God of the Bible, Jehovah, Yahweh, or as He has been most perfectly revealed – Jesus Christ!

- f. religious faith is not enough for there are many religions and many faiths
 - g. many people are *sincere* in their faith, but they are sincerely **WRONG!**
 - h. it isn't *sincerity* that matters but *truth!*
 - 1) during the days of the Black Death in Europe, people thought it was spread by evil vapors in the air
 - 2) they didn't realize that it was transmitted by germs in the bites of fleas
 - 3) so instead of clearing out the refuse and ridding their streets of the rats that carried the fleas, they picked flowers and stuck them in their pockets.
 - 4) they thought that the fragrance of the flowers would drive away the evil airs and protect them from disease.
 - 5) they were sincere in their belief in the protection of flowers – but they were wrong – dead wrong!
 - i. faith is only as good as it's object.
 - j. and this is why the Christian faith is the only truly good one – because it's object is real, whereas the faith of other religions is a fiction, regardless of how sincere it is.
10. The first step on the road of faith is to believe that the God of the Bible, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, *exists*.
- a. the first step to a life pleasing to God is believing that He has revealed Himself in times past through the prophets,
 - b. and as the writer says at the very outset of this book, that *finally* He revealed Himself *most perfectly* in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
11. After charting the first step of a life pleasing to God, the writer ends with the final step . . .
- . . . for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**
- a. the goal of *faith* in God is nothing less than the *experience* of God Himself.
 - b. once we embark on the path of faith and we start walking with God, we quickly come to realize that this is what life was made for!
 - c. we were given our being, granted our existence,

- 1) not to go to school and get a diploma
 - 2) not to then go to college and get a degree
 - 3) not to find a job and enlist ourselves in some life-long career
 - 4) we weren't conceived so that we could fall in love and get married and have children
 - 5) we weren't given life so we could provide income for businesses
 - 6) we were not called into being so we could sit at a table under the Golden Arches and consume grease-ridden fries and drink sugary soda
 - 7) we weren't brought into existence so we could grow old, retire, expire, be placed in a casket and lowered into the ground to decompose.
- d. we were created to know and love God, and to know His great love for us!
 - e. that's what life is *for* and *about*.
 - f. each day is another gift of 24 hours to fulfill the purpose of our being by walking with God.
 - g. and the farther we walk with Him, the more rich and full our faith in Him becomes,
 - h. till the day we step from this earth, through the portal called death, into the reward – the unhindered, uninterrupted presence of God!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Today's Point

1. The lesson we need to take from these 2 verses is this – “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”
2. That being the case, what do you think God is seeking to develop *in* you?
3. What is it that God is looking for *from* you?
4. He's looking for faith! What He wants to cultivate and develop *in* you is *more* faith.
5. Understand that right now, what God is doing in your circumstances is arranging them so that your trust and confidence in Him will grow!
6. I realize that some of us are going through incredibly difficult

- times right now
- a. when the waters are deep or the furnace is hot – it's easy to wonder if God knows what He's doing – He does!
 - b. when we're pressed and stressed and it seems our cries to God have gone unheard, it's easy to start thinking that God's abandoned us – He hasn't!
7. He's only seeking to take us a bit farther along on the path of faith.
8. Think of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-Nego standing before the Babylonian king who threatened them to bow or be burned alive in the fiery furnace.
- a. being men of faith, they said,
 - b. "O king – know this, we cannot bow to your image, and we are confident our God can deliver us ."
 - c. what a bold stand of faith – and we would think that based just on that boldness, they would be set free – but NO! they were shoved into the fire.
 - d. and what happened? God joined them in the flames!
 - e. tell me – knowing that they would experience the manifest presence of God, but that it would take the heat of the furnace to have it, do you think they would go back?
9. Think of the Bible's consummate example of faith – Job!
- a. here was a man whose walk with God lay through the valley of death
 - b. Job lost EVERYTHING – not just his physical wealth, of which he had much, but his health and even his friends
 - c. they all turned on him and became critics – even his wife turned against him!
 - d. but through it all, Job maintained his faith in God.
 - e. when every shred of evidence for the goodness of God had been stripped away, Job held on to the only thing that couldn't be taken away – the PROMISE of God.
 - f. he might not understand his circumstances, and so in the midst of confusion, he retreated to the one thing he *was* sure of – God Is GOOD!
 - g. and he hung on to that with all he had left
 - h. the end was great reward – all was returned to him many times over!
10. What God is seeking to develop in us is faith

- a. our whole lives are aimed at this one thing – giving glory and pleasure to God!
- b. faith is what brings Him consummate glory and pleasure!
- c. so, in all the circumstances you find yourself in the midst of, understand them as the tools God is using to deepen your walk and faith in Him.

B. The End

1. One day, your walk with God will lead you to a bridge, the other side of which lies in heaven.
2. A man who had lost everything in an economic crisis stopped to watch some men building a cathedral.
 - a. one of the masons was chiseling a triangular piece of rock.
 - b. the man asked, “What are you going to do with that?”
 - c. the workman said, “Do you see that little opening way up there near the spire? I'm shaping this block down *here* so that it will fit *up there*.”
 - d. tears filled the man’s eyes as he walked away.
 - e. it seemed that God had spoken through the workman to explain the ordeal through which he was passing.
3. God is shaping us “down here” so that we’ll better fit “up there.”

C. Don’t Complain – Praise!

1. I read something recently in Matt Redman’s new book *The Unquenchable Worshipper* that had a profound impact on me.
2. He quotes the faith-filled worship of the prophet Habakkuk [3:17-18]

17 Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

3. Habakkuk’s faith in God was unshakeable!
 - a. even though the evidences of God’s blessing were lacking –
 - b. he determined to maintain his faith in Him and His goodness.
 - c. his faith in God was *unquenched* by his circumstances and

moved him to worship and a confident expectation that God would reward him for his faith.

4. Let me ask you this morning:
 - a. Is God Good?
 - b. Is God sovereign and in control of the universe?
 - c. if our faith leads us to say “Yes” to these two truths, then is there any room whatsoever for negativity and complaint?
 - d. when I complain, am I not in fact denying either the goodness or sovereignty of God?
 - e. and if I deny *one* dimension of the nature and character of God, am I not in fact denying His very existence?
5. Complaining, negative Christians are an oxymoron!
6. There is only one kind of Christian – at least there ought to be –
Worshiping Christians!
7. The kind of people who live by faith in God, despite their circumstances,
8. In fact, the kind who understand that God is at work *through* their circumstances to take them farther along the path of faith.