

Sermon Notes
GCF Central
Hebrews 11:4-7
The Faith that pleases God
November 17, 2019

At some point in the Christian life, you begin to realize that this life of faith is longer and harder than you expected.

- A. Writer of Hebrews compares it to running a race, like a marathon.
- B. Some of you have run a marathon. (Ex SF marathon)
- C. Mile 13.....
- D. Two things kept me running. The encouragement of my friend and a next mile mentality. Just make it to the next mile, to the next water station.

We need this next mile mentality as we think about our Christian lives because at some point, we do realize that this race of faith is a lot harder and much longer than we anticipated.

- A. You wonder “how do I do it?” “How do I keep going and not quit?”
- B. Part of the answer is the next mile mentality. Even more, we need strong encouragement from those who have already run their race.
- C. Hebrews 11 is a veritable gallery of OT saints who persevered in faith and ran their races well.
- D. This whole chapter functions like a water station at each mile marker of our Christian life: we can be refreshed, hydrated, renewed so that we keep running.
- E. We are to find great encouragement from our ancestors when we are tempted to think God might not be faithful to us.
- F. What is clear from Hebrews 11 is that whoever we read about lived “by faith.”
- G. Faith is trusting in God and doing what he says. Faith is taking God at his word and acting accordingly. Faith is believing God when you cannot see him.
- H. This entire chapter is filled with men and women who did exactly that. (not perfect or sinless)
- I. As a result, God commends them for their faith. (V39)
- J. There was something pleasing to God about their faith.

What I want to do this morning is to take a closer look at the kind of faith that pleases God. We have three examples in our text.

- A. The first example is Abel – V 4 (Genesis 4:3-7).
- B. Here we find two blood brothers, sons of Adam and Eve.
- C. Both of them brought an offering to the Lord, though only Abel’s was deemed acceptable by God. (V4)
- D. Scripture does not tell us why. Implication is that the heart of the person giving the sacrifice matters to God.

- E. God is pleased with a heart of genuine devotion and trust.
- F. Abel offered God his best. That is what is indicated by the offering of his firstborn and the fat portions. Abel held nothing back from God.
- G. Abel is not simply “going through the motions.” He is not simply doing his religious duty.
- H. His sacrifice was an act of genuine heartfelt worship and God was pleased with his faith. (V4).
- I. The kind of faith that pleases God – like Abel – holds nothing back from God.

None of our hearts are completely pure and righteous. We tend to be more fickle and half-hearted than we want to admit.

- A. God is not after your “stuff.” He is after your heart.
- B. What might it look like to give God “your best” on a Sunday morning? (Get to bed earlier Saturday night, arrive 10 minutes early, stick around extra 10 minutes etc..)
- C. Abel’s faith was a wholehearted, hold nothing back faith. That is why his faith, V4, still speaks to us today.
- D. True faith in God is relevant in every age. This kind of faith is also risky in every age.
- E. For Abel, his sincere faith got him killed by his brother Cain. (shortened life)
- F. The judgment of God fell on Cain and the commendation fell on Abel.
- G. Even though he died thousands of years ago, Abel’s faith inspires us today.
- H. Ex...I hope one day to do your funeral. What do you want me to say about you?
- I. Biblical wisdom tells us that we should begin to run the next mile in light of our final mile.
- J. We can draw great courage and hope to keep running from Abel’s faith.

Our second example of faith that pleases God is Enoch. (V5) Genesis 5:21-24.

- A. We don’t know much about Enoch yet there is something pleasing to God about his faith.
- B. Twice we are told that Enoch “walked with God.” He communed with God.
- C. When you walk with another person, you are in close proximity with that person. You are listening to them, attentive to them, you are doing life together. You notice them!
- D. Enoch enjoyed the sweetness of a daily relationship with God. For Enoch, God was not some distant deity. He was personal. Close.
- E. Enoch knew God. God knew Enoch.
- F. Faith that is pleasing to God walks with God.

It is clear that Enoch’s release from death was due to his God-pleasing faith.

- A. God was pleased to transport Enoch directly to heaven, without tasting death.
- B. Sometimes, walking with God leads to a long and fruitful earthly life, like Enoch. For Abel, walking with God led to his immediate death.

- C. Humbly, we must acknowledge that faith that is pleasing to God leaves our earthly futures firmly in his hands.
- D. Isaiah 55:8-9.
- E. Enoch's example of faith calls us to walk with God and to enjoy the sweetness of fellowship with God every day.
- F. Who is it near you that is walking with God?
- G. One of the practical means of God's grace that comes from being part of the body of Christ – the church – is that we don't have to look too far to find people who are walking with God in everyday life.
- H. EX. Bud and Gladys Scott.
- I. There are no doubt other examples here at GCF.

From Abel we learn that the faith that pleases God holds nothing back from him. From Enoch the faith that pleases God walks with God.

- A. As we continue in Hebrews 11, we see the redemptive plan of God unfolding before us. Sin has marred and wrecked our relationship with God.
- B. Yet God has made a way for sinners to be cleansed and forgiven and to enjoy a vibrant relationship with God – by faith.
- C. Hebrews 11:6...
- D. You can do many good things. (serve, give, sacrifice etc..)
- E. But without faith, it is impossible to please God.
- F. There is no reward in heaven for the person who lives a moral life on this earth but who never bends the knee to Jesus Christ.
- G. Faith is essential in living a God pleasing life.
- H. Pleasing faith believes that God is real and that he rewards those seek him and judges those who do not.
- I. You might ask: Faith in what? Whom?
- J. The OT saints had a future focused faith, in the coming Messiah. This side of the cross, our faith is rooted in the finished work of our Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- K. The object of our pleasing faith remains the same: The Living Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
- L. It's not faith in faith, faith in yourself, others etc...
- M. The only faith that pleases God is faith in the true Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- N. The beauty of the gospel is that when you put your faith in Christ, it is impossible for you to be condemned. Even your worst sins on your worst day (Romans 8:38-39) cannot separate you from the love of God in Christ.
- O. When you put your faith in Christ, you are safe, no matter how hard the next mile may be.

The third example of faith that is pleasing to God is Noah. (V7) Genesis 6:5-8.

- A. These were dark days for humanity. Sin was ravaging the world and wickedness reigned on the earth.

- B. Noah found favor with God in a day when no one else walked with God.
- C. God warned Noah of the judgment that was to come. Noah listened to God. He paid attention to the warning and build a very large boat.
- D. Noah put his faith into action in building an ark, in a land that have never known rain.
- E. Faith that is pleasing to God fears God. Noah had no concept of a cataclysmic flood yet in reverent fear and holy submission he obeyed God.
- F. Noah's faith both saved his family and condemned an unbelieving world.
- G. The faith that is pleasing to God fears God.
- H. Now would be a good time to activate your fear of God.
- I. There is a proper biblical fear of God that says "I need to listen to God. I need to pay attention to him. I don't want to live with blinders on."
- J. If you don't activate your fear of God, then you will spend it on things not to be feared. (loss of reputation, status, bank account, other's opinions, terrorists, phobias etc...)
- K. God has given every person a capacity to fear Him. It's his grace and kindness to us.

The faith that pleases God fears God...which means that sometimes, your faith in Christ will cause others around you to think you are crazy.

- A. You don't think people started talking about Noah behind his back when he built a boat in his backyard?
- B. We need to be OK with not fitting in neatly in this world.
- C. It's ok if you are "an outsider" at the office dinner party. (examples....)
- D. At times, your faith in Christ will cause those around you to wonder, to question, maybe to ridicule, maybe worse.
- E. The kind of faith that is pleasing to God is content to live a radically different life.

By faith, Abel gave God his best. By faith, Enoch walked with God. By faith, Noah feared God.

- A. By faith, we are going to plant a Spokane Valley campus next year.
- B. By faith, the gospel ministry of this Central campus will grow and flourish.
- C. What is the next step of faith Jesus is asking you to take today?
- D. He may not be calling you to build a boat....but he is calling you to stay in hard marriage. (examples...)
- E. If you are here this morning and you are hearing about the need for faith in Christ and you are not sure what to do...put your faith in Christ. Turn to Jesus and be saved.
- F. Faith is a gift from God – it is not natural.
- G. Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9.