

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:4–7)

As with the readers of Hebrews, trials can reveal whom we seek to please. The first examples listed by the author of those in the past who lived by faith are especially said to have pleased God. Faith in God is important in pleasing God. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

I. *Abel by faith pleased God with his worship (11:4).* See Genesis 4:1–7.

1. *By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain.*

God accepted Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's indicating that in some way it was better, though not explicitly stated how. Nevertheless, since faith is based upon revelation, it is probably that Abel was responding to something which he knew from God and made his offering by faith. Genesis indicates that God had regard not merely for Abel's offering but also for Abel which implies that his character was important. Cain's evil character is revealed in his response. Cf. Matthew 7:20; Mark 7:21–22; Proverbs 15:8. Abel worshiped with a right heart and it pleased God.

2. *Through which [faith] Abel was commended as righteous.*

Although Genesis does not mention the righteousness of Abel, that he was commended as righteous is a logical, Scripture conclusion. Since the righteous will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, cited in Hebrews 10:38) and without faith one cannot please God (v.6), if Abel was accepted by God, he must have had faith and thus been considered righteous. Cf. Matthew 23:34; 1 John 3:12. Abel brought his offering with a right heart and God commended him as a righteous man by having regard for that offering.

3. *Abel speaks yet today through his faith.*

Abel, not his blood, speaks to us (and not to God) with a message that faith is important in God's sight. Faith is important in worship. Cf. Hebrews 13:15–16. Praise and thanksgiving acknowledges God and His goodness. By faith praise and thank God in all circumstances, so that you please God.

II. *Enoch by faith pleased God with his walk (11:5–6).* See Genesis 5:21–24.

1. *The account of Enoch's life is brief but with two items important in this letter.*

First, Enoch did not die, but was taken directly to be with God. Second, he was commended in life for 300 years as pleasing God (the Greek translation of "walking with God").

2. *The principle for all which was behind Enoch's life and translation: without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, ...*

a. True belief in the existence of God leads to the proper worship of God.

b. True belief in God as the "Rewarder" leads to relying upon Him for all our needs.

Cf. Psalm 42; 23. The ultimate "Reward" is being in the presence of God, a theme in Hebrews and the example of Enoch. Trust in God to meet your true needs, keep His promises, and satisfy your deepest longing.

III. *Noah by faith pleased God acting on God's revelation (11:7).*

1. *Noah acting by faith: Warned by God, he built an ark.*

Noah's obedience to clear revelation will become a pattern among the heroes of faith. Noah believed "things not yet seen" (neither floods nor rain had been seen) and "things hoped for" (salvation of his family). In faith he built an ark.

2. *God working through Noah's faith: Noah condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

Noah by his actions, and most likely by his preaching, condemned his contemporaries in their wickedness and lack of belief. Cf. 2 Peter 2:5; Matthew 24:37–39. He himself became an heir of righteousness, the righteousness which God counts towards those who live by faith (cf. 10:38; Romans 4:3).

It is necessary to come by grace through faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved from the bondage and penalty of sin. Those who come, also live for Christ by faith in every area of life. Without faith it is impossible to please God. The testimony of these three men tells us that living by faith pleases God. Live by faith and be pleasing to God.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- How (biblically) can and should we worship God and how do we have faith in such worship? How might it be possible to bring "offerings" to God and yet not have them acceptable to God?
- Does your daily worship of God reveal belief in the existence of God? How/how not? How can it improve? Does the "reward" you desire indicate that you truly seek God? How can we strengthen a proper desire for God?
- What truths from Scripture have you learned recently that you are by faith trying to apply? How?