

Faith That Greatly Pleases God

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I want to talk to you about what it takes to walk in the faith that pleases God. I'm talking about the kind of faith that causes change in impossible situations until every natural circumstance lines up with the Word of God.

Hebrews 11:6 provides an excellent definition for this kind of faith: *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.*

We see from this scripture that in order to have the kind of faith that pleases God, we must come to Him with two qualifications: 1) We must believe that He is, and 2) we must believe that He is a rewarder of those who give their time to diligently seek Him. These two qualifications also reveal the two basic levels of faith.

Unless you have faith that declares that God is, you can't even approach Him in faith; therefore, it is impossible for you to please Him. Those words "HE is" are similar to the way God addressed Himself in the wilderness when talking to Moses (Exodus 3:13,14).

Moses asked, "Whom shall I say sent me to the Pharaoh?"

God replied, "Tell him that I AM sent you."

This is one of God's names that describes His essence. When He replied to Moses, "I AM," He was actually saying, "I am simply the sum total of everything that exists - past, present, and future." Now apply this to YOUR walk with the Lord. When you come to God in the present, you must believe that He is at the exact moment you come to Him.

In other words, you must come to God believing He is everything He had said He is as your God and Father. Otherwise, you do not have faith that pleases Him.

This is a positional truth, derived from God's sovereignty. What do I mean by "positional truth"? A very important positional truth says when Jesus passed through the Cross, He set a divine law into operation that proclaims He provided salvation for every man, woman, and child. When any person meets God's requirements, that divine law kicks in, and he or she WILL be born again. This is a sovereign, positional truth - a universal law as inevitable as the law of gravity. As long as our covenant with God holds and people still need to be born again, not a man, woman, or child will ever come before God, believing in his or her heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and fail to be born again (Romans 10: 9-10).

Consider the natural law of gravity. When you throw a rock off a building, it is going to fall at a certain velocity. You can use mathematical calculations to figure out exactly what that rock is going to do. In the same way, you can know God's sovereign laws will operate according to His original plan. And as you come to Him believing these positional truths are exactly what He says they are, you can know your faith pleases Him.

Divine healing is another positional truth established by the sovereignty of God. Many people don't want to believe Jesus provided for their healing at the same time He provided for their salvation. They actually fight for a reason to justify their sickness! Unfortunately, the devil has been successful in deceiving the Body of Christ into believing God has reasons for allowing Christians to be sick. For instance, many believe God is withholding their healing simply because it was predestined for them to die of a certain disease. Or perhaps God has something valuable to teach them He knows they can't learn any other way.

So the devil comes with impressive-sounding doctrines to pull us away from God's positional truth that divine healing was provided in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If the enemy succeeds in this strategy, it becomes impossible for us to please God in this area because we can't come to Him believing He is who He said He is to us – our Healer as well as our Savior.

But you can mark this down, friend: Jesus absolutely provided healing for you. Two thousand years ago He bore your sicknesses and carried your pains. In His sovereignty, Jesus made healing available by divine law to every man, woman, and child who can believe for it.

In other words, God isn't sitting on the throne, selecting those He will heal and those He Will NOT heal. The positional truth He has established is absolutely sovereign. Now it is merely a matter of attaining its promise by faith. How does a person do that? By settling in his own heart THAT GOD is WHO HE SAID HE is. This is the first level of faith.

The devil hasn't the power to withhold God's positional truths from you. Regardless of your condition in life, God's divine law says when your faith pleases Him by believing that He is, then He will be what He said He would be in your life.

Then Hebrews 11:6 says you must believe that as you diligently seek Him regarding what He has said in His Word, He will become your REWARDER. This is the second level of faith. Paul is talking here about giving your life to the pursuit of God, for you cannot be diligent about something without paying the utmost attention to it.

God is our rewarder when we diligently seek out His positional truths and allow Him to become to us what He has already said He is. This kind of diligent seeking pleases Him because it allows Him to pour out His grace and abundant blessings on our lives the very reason He sent Jesus to the Cross in the first place!

But how does faith come to me to cause me to believe that God is and that He is my rewarder as I diligently seek Him? Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing the Word of God. As faith comes to me through the hearing of God's Word, it becomes the substance of that which I am hoping for (Hebrews 11:1). Therefore, if the hope that is in my soul has not been programmed by the Word of God, it cannot receive the substance of faith. Unfortunately, our hope too often ISN'T programmed by the Word. Instead, it gets destroyed by the world, by religion, or by well-meaning friends and doctors who are just trying to console us.

For instance, suppose a doctor just told me I had cancer and only six months to live. The hope in my soul to be healed from terminal cancer must be constructed by the Word that declares Jesus bore my

sicknesses and carried my pains; otherwise, faith cannot put substance to my hope, for faith comes only one way -- by hearing what the Word has to say about my problem. My doctor may be telling me I am going to die. Religion may be telling me I am going to die. If these are the voices I choose to listen to, my hope will remain full of holes, incapable of receiving the substance of faith.

Hebrews 11 also talks about men who pleased God with their faith. Of those mentioned here, one of my favorites is Noah. This man was determined to please God, even when it resulted in the condemnation of an entire world!

Look at what the apostle Paul said about Noah in verse 7: *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

By moving in the fear of God regarding something he could not see, Noah condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness by faith. Like the other godly people listed in Hebrews 11, Noah changed his world as he obtained a good report by faith.

Before I go further, I want to go back for a moment to Hebrews 11:3. For a long time, there was something in this verse that confused me as I studied this chapter about all these powerful, godly men who pleased God by faith. It says, *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

I remember how we faith ministers came on the scene and stretched out this verse as far as we could to prove one truth: Our need to fill our mouths with confessions of faith. This is how most of us translated verse 3: God stood on the edge of eternity and filled His words with faith. Then He said, "WORLDS, BE!" All of a sudden, His words (which were actually containers of faith) went forth into the universe and created galaxies, stars, and planets. Everything God described with His faith-filled words came into existence.

For a long time I thought, I think I understand this verse. It says by faith we can know the worlds of this universe were framed by the Word of God. But this verse just didn't seem to fit in the context of the rest of the chapter. Then later it struck me. I said, "Now, wait a minute. Am I sure I know what I'm talking about? I wasn't there on the edge of eternity when God created the universe. Since I wasn't there, I have to understand this verse by faith."

Finally, it dawned on me: What did Paul say about Noah? Noah moved in fear of what he could not yet see, and in doing so, he condemned the whole world and became one of the first heirs of righteousness by faith. Noah changed his whole world by his faith. So in effect Paul was saying in verse 3, "We understand that these godly men who pleased God framed their worlds by faith."

This word "worlds" refers to the many generations these men of God walked through and changed by faith because they came before God believing that He is. At times one man even changed an entire nation because he was moved by Someone he could not see. This is what Paul was talking about in verse 3.

Now Paul is talking to You. In this exhortation, he is not just talking about Old Testament saints; he is bringing it into the present tense and talking about YOUR inheritance as a son or daughter under

the New Covenant. Paul is saying in essence, "If you are going to please God as these men pleased Him when they changed their generations, you must believe that God is. He is everything He said He was to Moses when He said, 'I AM.' He is I AM to You today just as He was I AM to MOSES then. So if you are going to please God, you must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

You have the potential to change your natural circumstances, for things that appear in this natural realm are not eternal; they are only temporary and subject to change. God is telling you, "He who comes to Me and believes that I AM has the ability to bring about the needed change, for that which is temporary must give way to that which is eternal." You may say, "But I have a debt I cannot overcome; and on the edge of bankruptcy." Or, "My body has declared war on me."

Welcome to the club! You see, men and women who do exploits for God are not exempt from these kinds of problems; they just choose to rise above that mess. They don't sit around the rest of their lives and feel sorry for themselves. Instead, they put away such childish things and go on to spiritual maturity.

So let's explore further those two basic levels of faith found in Hebrews 11:3. I want to show you how to diligently seek God until He is able to deliver to you the kind of faith that pleases Him – the kind of faith that causes your body to come in line with the Word and changes temporary circumstances while you work an eternal change in your character. The answer can be found in Ephesians 5.

We have seen that you must first settle in your heart that God is the great I AM. You must believe that He is what He said He is. And if you cannot believe it, you must have enough respect for the Word of God to diligently seek Him until you do believe, regardless of what it costs you.

So let's go back to my hypothetical illustration. Suppose again that the doctor just told me the bad news: Cancer is going to terminate me in six months. Now, if I am going to come before God with this problem, I must first believe that He is what He said He is in His Word. Therefore, the first thing I must do is diligently seek to know the will of God according to Ephesians 5:17: *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* I have to find out what God has said concerning healing - whether or not it is part of my spiritual inheritance as a child of God.

As I diligently seek to know God's will, I discover that Jesus has already borne my sicknesses and carried my pains, dying in my place under the penalty of my disease. I also find out I was crucified with Him. That means when Jesus died under the penalty of my sickness and disease, I died of that disease with Him. In fact, every disease has been stripped of its power to kill me because Jesus became my Substitute.

Jesus was the only qualified Redeemer in the entire universe to carry the penalty for my sin, for He was sin-free. But He didn't just carry the penalty of my sin; He also carried the penalty for every disease known to mankind so I could live sickness-free on this earth.

Because Jesus was my Substitute, in God's eyes it was as if I died on that Cross when Jesus died. I also died of every disease known to mankind when I died with Him. Therefore, I can absolutely know for certain that no disease on planet earth has the authority to come to my house and kill me

because I already died of that disease once when I died with Jesus.

This is what I come to understand concerning God's will for my healing. Not being unwise, I establish myself in the wisdom that Jesus bore my sicknesses and carried my pains. Then I approach God with the faith that pleases Him, knowing He is who He said He is.

As I continue to diligently seek God, I discover in Ephesians 5:18 the next step I must take: *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.* But how do I stay filled with the Spirit? Verse 19 answers that question: *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

Did you know you can literally minister to yourself through worship until you are filled with the Holy Spirit?

To better understand what verse 18 is saying, I pondered the reason many people become alcoholics. If you get an alcoholic sober and then refuse to give him his bottle, he may try to commit suicide. Why? Because the only way he kept himself from committing suicide up to that point was to stay intoxicated and therefore oblivious to his problems. Even though the problems were always there, the alcohol affected his natural senses in a way that kept him from having to face them.

So what was Paul endeavoring to tell me in these two verses? He was saying, "Don't be drunk on wine to excess like those who get drunk to escape their problems. Instead, be filled with the Spirit by ministering to yourself in hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs. As you do, the Holy Spirit will come out of His place where He resides within you and so thoroughly baptize your emotions and your natural senses in the Word of God that, like a drunk man, you will become oblivious to the devil, to the doctor, and to everyone else who says you are going to die. That's when you will put aside every other voice and believe only what God says about your problem!

So now I know the next step in attaining the kind of faith that pleases God: I must continually be filled with the Holy Spirit. That means my senses and my emotions must be so under the ascendancy of the Word that I literally become intoxicated on the Holy Spirit. Thus, I become inoculated against the problem I face because I can now see it only from God's perspective.

And how do I become filled with the Spirit? In my private time of worship, I minister to my own soul in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. I sing or speak forth in psalms what God has said about the problem. I sing in hymns what man has written about what God has said. And I sing spiritual songs by coming before God in worship and praise. Hour after hour, I worship the Lord, making a spiritual song out of who He is.

I say, "Lord, I worship You - not because devils or diseases are subject to me, but because my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I rejoice that You are My Father. I'm not here because I want something. I just want to stand here and tell you a thousand times how much I love and adore and glorify You."

Soon I am speaking forth His will of which I am no longer unwise. "Oh, Jesus, You are forever the same - yesterday, today, and forever. You change not. You have exalted your Word above Your name. Therefore, You bore my sicknesses and carried my pains. Listen to me, soul, I am healed!"

Now, when I first began to hear teaching on faith confessions, I was troubled because I couldn't see why confessing something once was any different than saying it ten thousand times. I asked the Lord, "Are You deaf or hard of hearing? Why did You heal me after I had confessed my healing ten thousand times? Why can't I just say it once? After all, I believe I received my healing when I prayed for it. That should have been all that was needed."

But that is usually NOT all that is needed. Why? Because your hope is often too damaged by the negative voices of the world, the devil, religion, or well-meaning people. Therefore, it isn't God you are trying to move – it is you. You are ministering to yourself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs because you are in unbelief that God is all He has said He is in His Word.

Thus, my ten thousand confessions are not like the confessions of the heathen man who believes he will be heard for his much speaking. I know that God is longing to get His hands on my problem and to move on my behalf. As Romans 8:32 says, He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also FREELY give us all things? No, I am not trying to move God with my confessions of faith in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. It is my own soul I am ministering to!

You see, our souls will eventually transform us to whatever we subject ourselves to the most. This explains why, in my hypothetical situation where I only have six months to live, it isn't enough for me to listen to my pastor teach the Word for two hours a week. More than likely, my hope is too damaged to successfully stand against the negativism that bombards me twenty-four hours a day from doctors and a stream of relatives who have come to see me for the last time.

I might have to go before God in worship fifty thousand times and diligently minister to my own soul until my hope is repaired - until I cross the line from hope that cannot receive the substance of faith to a faith that can absolutely change my world according to the Word of God. That kind of faith encompasses both Level One (believing that God IS) AND Level Two (that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him) and is therefore the kind of faith that pleases God!

Sadly, most of us "faith people" never get beyond Level One of faith. Yes, we admire the Word. We even adhere to it as absolute truth and the final say-so. If you ask us, "Are you a son or daughter of God?" we enthusiastically reply, "Yes!" Yet most of us don't care enough about our relationship with our Heavenly Father to diligently seek out and fulfill our responsibilities so we can walk in the fullness of its benefits!

Therefore, most of us just remain on Level One of our faith walk. We admire the Word as truth, but we don't respect it enough to diligently minister to ourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs until our souls line up with the truth. In other words, we don't take the necessary steps to subject our senses and our emotions to the Word until we need no other confirmation but the Word to believe that our bodies are healed even if the symptoms of disease haven't yet left our bodies.

Let me stress this all-important point one more time. We must first come to God believing that positionally, He is our Answer. If we don't believe that, we will never reach the second level of faith, where we begin to diligently seek God until we receive what His Word says.

Admiring the Word isn't enough. We have to respect it enough to subject our senses and emotions to its authority until our souls are trained to receive and believe what God has said about our problems. And we must be willing to keep doing this until we receive our answer, no matter how long it takes. This is what God means by seeking Him DILIGENTLY.

I am telling you, if you are going to have the kind of faith that pleases God and gets results, you must make the decision to move on from Level One. Don't just admire the Word as truth. Respect it enough to do what is necessary to diligently seek God. As you do, He WILL reward you. The benefits of becoming His child under the New Covenant will come as alive in you as God's Word did in Moses when he was backed up against the Red Sea and there seemed to be no way out!

You don't have to run from your problems. Just do what is necessary to get filled with the Holy Ghost, and He will cause you to look at those problems with the same lack of concern that the drunk man looks at his problems. But there will be one huge difference between you and that drunk man. Unlike him, you will be doing what is necessary to change your world and eliminate your problems by the mighty power of God's Word!