

Pleasing God

Hebrews 11:6



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FOCAL Read In Unison Hebrews 11:6 But without faith¹ [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.^{KJV}

PRAYER Heavenly Father, if we should suffer need, and go unclothed, and be in poverty, make our hearts prize Thy love, know it, be constrained by it, though we be denied all blessings. It is Thy mercy to afflict and try us with wants, for by these trials we see our sins, and desire severance from them. Let each of us willingly accept misery, sorrows, temptations, if we can thereby feel sin as the greatest evil, and be delivered from it with gratitude to Thee, acknowledging this as the highest testimony of Thy love. When thy Son, Jesus, came into our souls instead of sin He became more dear to us than sin had formerly been; His kindly rule replaced sin's tyranny. Teach us to believe that if ever we would have any sin subdued we must not only labor to overcome it, but must invite Christ to abide in the place of it, and He must become to each Christian more than vile lust had been; that His sweetness, power, life may be there. When we are afraid of evils to come, comfort us by showing us that in ourselves we are dying, condemned wretches, but in Christ we are reconciled and live.

1 G4102, πίστις, *pistis*, *pis'-tis*, From G3982; *persuasion*, that is, *credence*; moral *conviction* (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially *reliance* upon Christ for salvation; abstractly *constancy* in such profession; by extension the system of religious (Gospel) *truth* itself: - assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

Help us all learn to say and believe that “in myself I find insufficiency and no rest, but in Christ there is satisfaction and peace; that in myself I am feeble and unable to do good, but in Christ I have ability to do all things. Though now I have His graces in part, I shall shortly have them perfectly in that state where Thou wilt show Thyself fully reconciled, and alone sufficient, efficient, loving me completely, with sin abolished. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, is our prayer. Amen!”².

INTRODUCTION What is the normal Christian life?

This question is particularly hard to answer in these latter days. Why? Because in many instances it is hard to tell the difference between the *professing* Christian and the world at large. What is a Christian? Some people answer, “A Christian is someone who goes to Church”. That's true, Christians do “go to Church” - but so do unbelievers and seekers of the truth. Another may answer, “A Christian is someone who gives of their income to missions and the local Church”. Again, that is true. Christians can and do give – and should give – but unbelievers also throw money in the collection plate when it is passed. Anything the unbeliever can do is not what defines a Christian. Our focal text today defines who a Christian is. Read the text again with me as we break it down:

But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]:

² Suggested from *Valley of Vision, a collection of Puritan Prayers*

The Christian is a person who has *saving faith in God*. His life has *been transformed* by his encounter with Jesus Christ.

for he that cometh to God must believe that he is

The Christian is a person who *comes to God believing in God*.

and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him

The Christian is a person who *diligently seeks an ever deepening relationship with God*. When a person has all three of these elements actively in their lives then that person *knows* that he or she is Heaven bound.

The Christian Has Saving Faith In God

When we talk about this passage we need to define it – not in modern terms – but in *First Century Christian Church terms*. When we read the Scripture:

FOCAL 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.**

These words do not have the same weight in our modern language as they did in the early Church. In the modern Church the pastor often begs and pleads with sinners until someone makes a move to salvation. That which people fear today is mockery. The early Christian entered

salvation knowing that his life wasn't worth a plugged nickel because of two powerful enemies: the religious hierarchy of Israel, and the Roman state.

Caesarian Rome treated Israel well for a captured people, and even allowed her to maintain a Temple of God. The Romans were a nation filled with false gods. What was one more God to Caesar? Rome tolerated the religion of the Jews as long as Caesar was worshiped once a year. Every person under Roman control was supposed to periodically go to Rome and burn incense to Caesar, after which his image was bowed down to as god. The Jews were not forced to do this, perhaps because of Herod the Great³. Herod rebuilt the Temple and, though hated by the Jews, provided some level of protection so they could worship God somewhat unhindered.

Enter Jesus Christ. When God became Incarnate and walked among us He knew that He would be hated by those who worshiped the false gods. This new group of people called *Christian* were neither worshipers of the Roman gods, nor did they continue to follow the practices of the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. This is why Jesus warned us:

Matthew 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Christian believers were given the opportunity to burn

³ Herod had Jewish connections. His family was of Idumaeen (ancient Edom, descendants of Esau) origin, those who had been converted to Judaism by force by the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus.

incense to burn incense to Caesar once a year. If they would but do this they would be left alone to worship their Jesus just as the Jews were left alone to worship in the Temple. Christians *refused* to believe in any other gods and goddesses, and refused to bow down to an image of Caesar. This is why Christians were hunted down and killed in terrible ways. They would not share their faith with anyone else. They believed the words of Jesus:

John 14:6 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Jesus Christ is the only Way to a relationship with God the Father. No other god would be tolerated, death or no death. He alone is Lord!

Many professing believers today would say “What's the harm – burn a little incense to Caesar then go and worship the real Almighty. God knows that my heart's not in it! He will understand.” No, God will not understand. Jesus said **he that endureth to the end shall be saved**. Saving faith must have doctrinal knowledge, yet the faith that saves must go deeper than doctrinal knowledge. The Pharisees and Scribes had *doctrinal* knowledge and yet were not saved. The Roman pagans had an emotional *experiential* knowledge, and yet were not saved. Saving faith is *life transforming*.

For the early Christian faith in Christ meant that they would *be put to death* – and yet they believed anyway! That's a far cry from the faith that many profess today.

The Apostle Paul said:

2 Timothy 1:8-12 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; (9) Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: (11) Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. (12) For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

The Apostle Paul had the privilege of *dual citizenship*. Though he was of the Tribe of Benjamin, of the nation Israel, he was also a Roman citizen by birth. This gave him a status that was envied by most Israelites.

Paul could have easily invoke Rome and then, to avoid imprisonment, have offered incense to Caesar. This would have given him freedom from prison. Yet Paul had a *life changing faith in Christ*. For him as well as for all early Christians it was an honor to suffer persecution for the Master. Further, the Apostle understood that this life is fleeting – yet what he had given to Jesus by faith was *eternal*. “**For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day**”.

If you've been saved by faith in Christ, you have been saved by Him Who has *abolished death*. If you have been saved by faith in Christ you have committed your soul to His keeping. If you have been saved by faith in Christ He Who has saved you has the power to *keep on saving you*.

**The Christian Is A Person Who Comes To God
Believing In The God Who Is**

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Salvation is a *specific faith in the One Specific God*. People say “I believe in God”, but what do they mean when they say that? Do they believe in and obey the One Specific God of Scripture, or do they “believe in God” as an abstract concept? **He that cometh to God must believe that HE IS**. There is only One God, and this God is revealed to us through His Only Begotten Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus said:

John 14:6-10 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (7) If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. (9) he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father? (10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

What can be known of God can only be known through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the *manifest Member of the Godhead*, and salvation only comes to those who – seeing Jesus – they believe in Him unto salvation.

There is One God revealed to us in Scripture. There is only one way to come to know this God, and that is through faith in Christ Jesus. There are many great people of faith listed in the pages of the Scripture – indeed, many are listed in this one chapter. We see **Abel** who offered the proper sacrifice to God – and was killed by his brother because of it. The sacrifice of the animal's blood was an Old Testament shadow of the coming Cross of Christ. The work of our hands will not save us – only the work of the Blood of Calvary. **Enoch** walked with God, and became the first person to be taken from this life without passing through physical death. **Noah**

was warned by God and built an ark, without which humanity would have been completely destroyed under God's wrath. **Abraham** obeyed God, and believing in Him followed wherever God led. **Abraham** would have sacrificed **Isaac** if the Lord decreed it. These people **believed that God is**, then proved their faith by obediently following where God directed. When God appeared to **Moses** at the burning bush the Lord told him:

Exodus 3:6 Moreover he said, **I [am] the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.** And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

The Lord mentions three patriarchs by name, **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. These were all forefathers of Moses, no longer walking the earth when Moses walked the earth. And yet **He – the Almighty God – was still their God**. How could this be if they were dead and gone? It couldn't be if death is the end of life. But if physical death is *but a passing into the presence of God* then what the Lord said - “**I [am] the God ... of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**”. Our God is the God of the living, as Jesus said:

Mark 12:26-27 ... have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I [am] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? (27) He is not the God of the dead, but the God of

the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Christian comes to God *believing in God*. The Christian is a person who *knows that salvation from death and sin is only by faith in Christ*. How then was **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saved**? Again Jesus explains to the Jews:

John 8:56-58 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad. (57) **Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?** (58) **Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *looked forward* to the promises of the God Who is. They looked forward believing in the Coming Messiah. They knew that **God is**, and knew that their faith in Him *bound them to the God Who is*.

Our salvation is not bound to rituals. The mistake of the Pharisee and the Sadducee was in binding their salvation to *rituals*. **He that cometh to God must believe that He is**. We must believe that God is able to save us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must believe that we are bound to God, not by *Mosaic ritual and Law*, but by love. We who believe are saved by Grace because Jesus Christ

Galatians 1:4 ... **gave himself for our sins,**

that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Because **God is**, He continues to save those who believe in Him. Because **God is**, I am **delivered from this present evil world**. God the Son is My Savior, and has bound me to the family of God and to Heaven.

If I am saved by rituals then the Cross of Calvary has no meaning for me. But if I am saved by the Lord Jesus Christ Who loved me and died for me, and rose again on the third day for me, then **the God Who is** assures me that **I too will always be in the present tense**. God and I are bound in the eternal “now”, and death truly has no meaning for me. Because **God is**, suffering is bearable, for He has promised that He **would never leave nor forsake me**. God is! God is there when I fail Him, and ready to forgive when I ask. God is through all the peaks and valleys of life. **C.H. Spurgeon** wrote:

"There is no place where God is not. God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding rocky barriers, filling the buttercups with their perfume and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Descend... into the lowest depths of the ocean, where undisturbed water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. His beauty is stamped in all of creation. The

glory of God can be seen from the smallest raindrop to the mighty flash of lightning; from the tiny rosebud to the huge magnolia blossom; from the rich, fertile soil of the Mississippi Delta to the arid, dusty land of the desert. We can see His stamp of glory in all the world, from the music of a sparkling brook to the majestic tumbling waterfall; from the gnarled, gentle hands of a loving grandfather to the birth-fresh fragility of a baby's fingernail; from the silence of the stars to the peal of thunder; from the mirror-like smoothness of a placid lake to the wind-driven thunderous waves smashing on the shore. In the fresh greenery of the spring; in the dazzling color of autumn; in the joy of discovery on a baby's face; and in the fulfillment and meaning of the New Birth, we can see the glory of God⁴."

He that cometh to God must believe that He is. God is, but for the Christian God is our Father, revealed through God the Son, and known through the power of God the Holy Spirit. God is!

The Christian Is A Person Who Diligently Seeks To Know More Of God

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Christianity – true Christianity – is a diligent seeking of

God. The words **diligently seek**⁵ in our focal text is the Greek ἐκζητέω, ekzēteō, (pronounced *ek-zay-teh'-o*), which literally means “**to search out, investigate, crave after**”. The word is in a *tense and mood* that signifies *habitual or repeated action*. Those whom God saves *crave His presence*. Those whom He has saved are *continually interested in learning more about Him*.

Dr. Voddie Baucham said “**Grace means that we deserved death, but received life.**” Imagine that you have been brought into the coliseum to meet your death. You are given a small knife with which to defend yourself, then the guards leave. As you watch a gate at the far side of the amphitheater opens, and out runs one of the largest and hungriest lions you have ever seen. As he runs toward you you see dripping from his mouth the evidence of his hunger, streams of saliva pouring out as he anticipates the meal you will make. The lion runs closer and closer and you, knowing it to be futile, stick out your knife and brace yourself for the agony that is to come. Your bowels betray you. “Oh, Dear God, send the Savior!” you croak. And then it happens. The lion slows, then stops, for between you and this terrible beast stands the Savior. A moment before death charged at you, but now you have life. Death has lost its sting. Behind the Savior death can never seize you – He stands between you and the best that Satan and the world throw at you.

Don't you want to know more about the One Who

4 http://www.appleseeds.org/Spurgeon_Glory-God.htm

5 Present Active Participle of G1567, ἐκζητέω, ekzēteō, *ek-zay-teh'-o*, From G1537 and G2212; to *search out*, that is, (figuratively) *investigate, crave, demand*, (by Hebraism) *worship*: - en- (re-) quire, seek after (carefully, diligently).

suffered and died for you?

There is a terrible concept that has arisen in Christianity in the last few years that either the Lord saves us so we can *freely go out and sin*. Nothing could be farther from the truth! It is certain that we who are saved will sin. Jesus taught us in the model prayer to say:

Luke 11:3-4 “Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”^{NIV}

Jesus taught us to daily confess our sins to God, knowing full well that every day *we will sin*. Yet the difference between the **saved and the lost** is whether the *conscience is touched by that sin or not*. The Christian, though he may sin, is in a *perpetual state of growth*. The Christian knows that Jesus Christ:

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Illustrate Evangelist Vance Havner said, ““Salvation is not a cafeteria where you take what you want and leave the rest. You cannot take Christ as Savior and refuse Him as Lord and be saved.” Saving faith brings with it a *diligent seeking after God*. If you are saved, you are now the Temple of God. God is in you, and you are

in God. If you are saved your life will reflect that. You will **diligently seek after God**. We who believe seek after God **in prayer, in study of the Word of God, and in Christian fellowship or the meeting of the local Church**. A Christian is *never whole* unless he or she *routinely and habitually speaks to the Living Word of God (Prayer), studies the written Word of God (the Bible), and then puts the Word of God into action through fellowship in the local Church*. I have heard people say, “I can worship God in the woods just as well as I can in the local Church meeting.” What does God say about that?

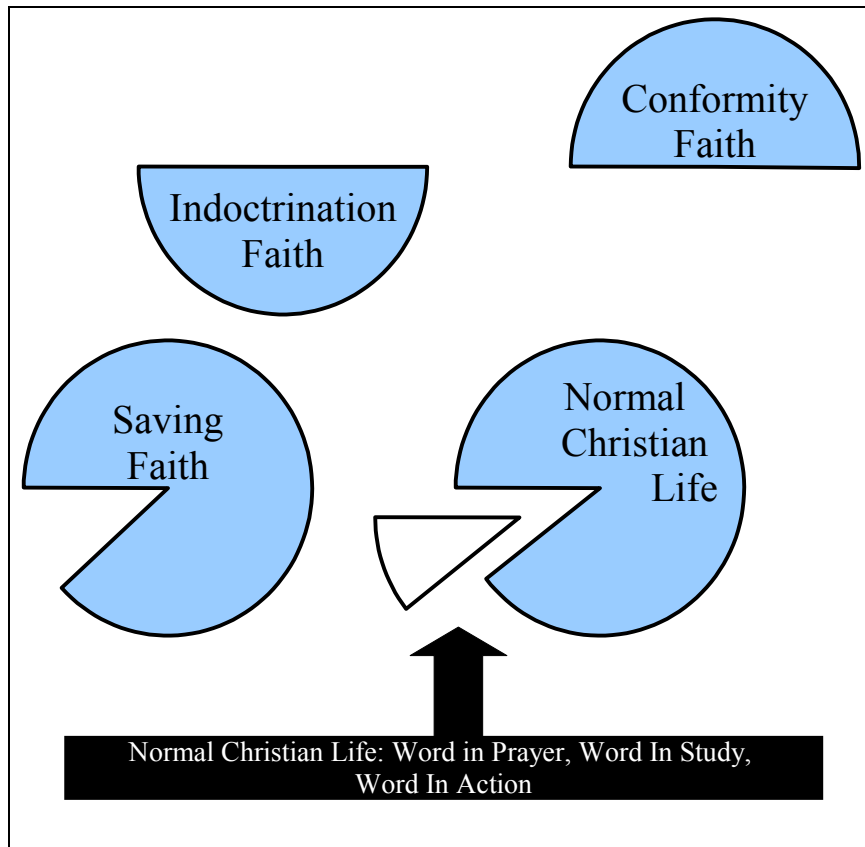
1 John 3:10-11 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. (11) For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.**

1 John 2:4-5 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (5) But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

God demands of the Christian that we put **the Word in prayer, the Word in study, and the Word in action**.

The Christian **diligently seeks** these things because without it there is a slice of emptiness in our lives. **God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.** If you are saved, you are hungry to know more of Him!

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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