

Without faith

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- [0 : 00] Let us turn now to the passage we read. Consider verse 6, the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 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 seeketh. The whole of this chapter was written really by the apostle to illustrate the kind of faith that the Old Testament saints possessed.
- And we read concerning the exercise of that faith of theirs, that they pleased God. We see from verse 2 that they obtained a good report.
- We read that they were acceptable to God. That they were righteous before God. And so on. It is obvious as you read right through this chapter and as the apostle cites, example after example of men and women of faith, that these were people who delighted in God.
- [1 : 46] And people who in common with Abraham became known as the friends of God.
- And they were that and they became known as that simply because they obeyed him.
- Simply because they believed in God. And the point that the apostle is making in this sick version is that it is impossible for anybody in any age to come into that relationship with God apart from faith.
- It is, he says, impossible to please God without faith. And when he makes that statement, it is very obvious that nothing can be substituted for faith in that connection.
- It doesn't matter, therefore, what a person does. It doesn't matter how he does it. It doesn't matter when he does it or for whom he does it.
- [3 : 09] Whatsoever is not of faith is not pleasing to God. And that is true, as I said, of everybody.
- And hence, one of the great characteristics and one of the distinguishing features of the Christian, of the believer, wherever he or she may be, or whoever he or she may be, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian is that he believes in God.
- And another point that the apostle here makes is this, that the person who has that faith in God is so influenced and so motivated by it that he, as he puts it here, he comes to God.
- And we see, therefore, that coming to God is the fruit of faith.
- It is the effect of faith. It is the inevitable consequence of believing in God. Whenever a person believes in God, he comes to God.
- [4 : 39] And the first thing that we look at here tonight is what this means. What is it for a person to come to God? And the other thing that we look at is the God to whom that person comes.
- He that cometh to God must believe that God is. He believes in the existence of God.
- He believes in the reality of God. God is real to this person. But the question the Bible also tells us, and this passage tells us, who this God is for the person who comes to him.
- That's the second point we look at. Who is this God to whom he comes? What is it that he believes about him? He believes that God is. And then thirdly, the verse tells us that he believes something particular about this God.

He believes that this God works. That this God acts. And that he acts in a particular way towards a particular person.

[6 : 09] He believes that God rewards them that diligently seek him.

And for a little tonight then I would like to look with you at these three things that are true of every single believer, of every single Christian.

First of all, he comes to God. Secondly, he comes to a God whose existence he believes. And thirdly, he comes to God whose activity he also believes in.

He is a God who rewards. And I take this verse tonight because God willing, a week today, we will as a congregation sit together to remember the death of our Lord till he comes.

Now as you know, just as well as I do, this Lord's table to which we are called is a means of grace which is open only to believers.

[7 : 25] It isn't open to all and sundry. We believe that the, for example, the Bible and prayer are means of grace which ought to be used by everybody.

But the Lord's table is not in that category. The Bible doesn't place it in that category. I am not at liberty to come to the Lord's table just because it is the Lord's table.

The only thing that warrants me to come is by being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What then is it to be a believer? Well the first thing that we are told about that person in this verse is that he comes to God.

It is because he is a believer that he comes. He doesn't come that he might believe. He comes as a result of belief.

[8 : 35] Of course it isn't too difficult to prove that because by nature no sinner comes to God.

it isn't the natural disposition or the natural bent of any sinner to come to God. As a matter of fact it is natural for the unsaved sinner to get away from God.

Some of you may have heard this statement used with reference to men. I think I remember many many years ago wasn't it in I can't remember was it when Dr.

Billy Graham the American evangelist came to Britain in 1953 wasn't it I can't remember was it on that visit or on a subsequent visit that the newspapers quoted him as saying I believe he said that there is a thirst for God amongst the people of Great Britain others have gone further and have coined this phrase with reference to people that amongst men there is a quest for God however appealing that statement may sound the one thing that one can say without any fear of contradiction whatsoever is that it is profoundly wrong there is no quest for God in the heart of the human race there is no quest for God in the heart of natural man there is no quest for God in the heart of an unconverted individual the unconverted individual finds himself standing in the shoes of

Adam when he said in the garden of Eden I heard thy voice in the garden and I hid myself because I was afraid that is where the natural man stands he doesn't want God he doesn't come to God this is the ungodliness of the human heart he doesn't come he doesn't want to so when the new testament tells us that there is a person who comes to God that Bible that new testament is speaking of a person who has been saved a person who has been converted a person who has been born again a person in whose life ungodliness has been removed a person in whose life opposition to God and hatred of God and the spirit of not wanting God has been taken away and in its place has been substituted this attitude when he wants to come to

[11 : 49] God and he comes in reverence he comes in devotion he comes with desire he comes in dependence he comes seeking the Lord he comes in the spirit of submission he comes in the spirit of faith and hope and yearning and love it is because God has touched his life that there is generated now in his heart the desire for God that is the testimony of the Bible we sang it here tonight in Psalm 27 when you said to me seek my face then I responded I replied to thee Lord thy face I will seek same with the psalmist in

Psalm 130 I cried to thee from the depths I cried to thee that thou wouldst hear me the same man my soul pants for God as the heart of the deer pants for the living waters so my soul pants for thee he comes to God because God has come to him he has been turned by God that he might come to him some of you remember as I was thinking of this today I thought it was one of the professors whom we had in the college my own student days but then the more I thought about it the more it came home to me that it was a man who used to an elder who has gone now to be with the

Lord used to say this speaking to the question and I heard him saying this to the question he was an ex army man and he said that what happened in conversion was this you see in the army says we were taught what right wheel and left wheel we were taught what these things meant but he says in conversion it's not a right wheel or a left wheel it's an about turn this is what happens in conversion the Lord lays his hand out of an individual turns him round to seek him you see his back is to God he's going away from him and what happens is God comes into his life touches him and he turns him now to do something he never did in his life before he seeks the Lord he comes to him and he comes to him in that movement of soul God word he is convinced about the truth of eternal things and he has no option he cannot but come fight it though he may he still finds as he fights against this influence this power operating in his life he still finds that he cannot but come to

God thou says the Bible thou shalt make a willing people in a day of thy power his thinking is now put right his acting is put right God or his feeling about God is put right he moves in this God word direction he is constrained to come now that's the first thing we read here about all these Old Testament saints they came to God and there isn't a Christian in the world tonight but a Christian who comes but a person who comes to God and you know when people say to me you don't need to be a

Christian to come to church at the back of that statement is a denier of what the Bible says about the Christian I'm not saying that if you are a Christian you must come to church I don't say that but I say this to you I have never yet in the word of God come across a person who was a believer in the Lord who didn't want to use every means where God revealed himself have you well I haven't and I think I know my Bible pretty well not as well as I ought and I hope not as well as I will but I still haven't come across a person who was known as a believer who didn't want to get to that place where God revealed himself you see it is the inevitable consequence of grace in your heart that you want to be where

[17 : 31] God is and if he's anywhere he's in the gatherings of his people now then the second thing is this what God do they come to or to be more precise what is it that they believe about this God well listen to the way he puts it here without faith it is impossible to please and this is faith he comes to God he that cometh to God comes he must believe that he is well you know as that statement stands you would almost be persuaded to think that all you have to say to convince yourself and others that you are a believer is well I believe that

God exists but you see that is why I said at the outset that coming to God is the fruit of faith in other words what you believe profoundly influences the way you live and the way you act you can't just say oh yes well if that's all well in that case I believe as well I believe in God I believe that there is a God I believe he exists I believe perhaps some people won't go that far but at least we know that some people would say oh well I believe in a supreme being I believe that there is someone or something away beyond the scene yes I believe in that ah my friend that's not enough James in his letter in chapter two says and he makes a picture of a fellow coming to him and says to him do you know something

James I believe like you I believe that God is that so says James well let me tell you something I'll tell you what company you're in that is as far as your faith goes you're in the company of the devils because the devils believe but I want to ask you something does your faith or rather does the God in whom you believe affect your life influence your life because let me tell you something the devils believe and they tremble what effect does your faith have on you so you see my friend it's not enough to say oh I believe in the existence of God you have to say that if you're a Christian but then you see that faith that you have must have some effect upon you as a Christian and what effect does it have on you the one we saw at the beginning you come to

God you come wanting God you come seeking God you come loving God and you come with that heartfelt desire for the things of God you must you have no option your whole life has been changed by what by this God in whose existence you believe you believe in the existence of God what do you believe in what God is it that you believe in there is only one God that you can believe in it can only be the God who reveals himself you must be persuaded of the truthfulness and the reality of this being and you believe all that is said all that he says about himself you become convinced of the truth about the reality of

God and you become convinced of the truth about the graciousness and the working of God atheism skepticism agnosticism indifference to the things of God all these things are dispelled when God touches your life and when you come to and you delight in the discovery that there is a God there are some people in this church tonight who don't delight in that discovery who have never made the discovery who don't delight in the knowledge that there is a God I wouldn't be surprised if there may be some people here and the very thought of God disturbs their conscience disturbs their peace disturbs the way they live I have no doubt there are people like that

[22 : 42] God invades their thought as he invaded the thoughts of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar God came in and they became troubled because they didn't want to they would far rather do without him but see the difference in the Christian God comes in and they believe with a spirit of rejoice with a sense of relief you see one person is disturbed that God is the other is profoundly relieved that God is one runs away from him doesn't want him the other comes to him with his problems and his burdens and his cares he cannot come to anyone else because there's no one else who can help him in his situation the Bible tells us we are not to trust man nor princes

I can't commit my I can discuss my cares with you and my problems and my fears and my difficulties and my hopes but I can't commit them to you I can't trust them to you I can only commit them to the Lord and trust them to the Lord and this is what is meant here he believes in the existence of God what God the God of revelation the God of revelation he believes in the God who speaks about eternal things he believes in our God and this is what the apostles here say in the beginning of this chapter what is faith faith is that which believes the things that can't be seen faith is that which is convinced of the reality of things that it cannot prove to anyone else by sight ah you say surely that is what you call a leap in the dark no my friend it is what others have called a leap in the light it is an acceptance of the light of the truth of

God it is a conviction about that the things that God says are absolutely true though we don't see that and you might say to me ah well what do you mean surely I've got to understand these things I tell you this there are many things that we believe that we cannot understand many things there are many things that we believe that we cannot reconcile but we know that if God says them they are true whether I understand them or whether I can reconcile them or not that's not the point the point is this that God speaks and when God speaks God is true and remember there's something else that the Bible says about that attitude of mind it is the fool you say to me ah well I am sure that I would want great better foundation for belief than that can you tell me if there's a better foundation for belief than that

God speaks is there would you put your own understanding of these things before the fact that God says it this is what faith comes in some may say it's only a fool who would believe what he can't see let me answer you the fool who doesn't believe what he doesn't see the fool is a passion who doesn't believe what God says the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God or faith in God that's when you become wise when you accept the revelation that

God has given of himself and I will say this to you that I don't know of any revelation that God has given of himself but the revelation that he's given of himself in the Bible in the Bible it isn't the faith of a cult or a sect but the faith of the God of the Bible and you need no more and you dare do with less than this the God of the Bible is a God who has revealed himself and faith apart from the God of the Bible is non-existent that kind of faith is a false claim it isn't faith at all and remember this that faith is also the object of faith is this passion God himself the

[28 : 07] God who has revealed himself that's the way the Bible always speaks of it faith in God faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the passion to whom we come and the passion whom we believe is a passion who has said certain things about himself and what he says about himself draws our confidence towards this is not mere what we would say mere intellectual belief it's a belief as I said which influences the person who believes he comes to this God he comes to him as the creator he believes that he is the creator of all things how do I prove to you that God is the creator of all things I cannot prove to you that God is the creator of all things I believe what God says of himself that is the creator of all things and I'm in good company because says this writer verse 3 through through 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 and I know that there are some young people here tonight who have very real problems in this area of belief when they are confronted with so many people so many things which suggest to them that the worlds were not created the universe was not created as the bible says it was there was another way in which all these things came into being and the course of history millions and millions of years ago when the human race came into being man appeared on the face of the earth well you see it's a case of accepting what the bible says about it or rejecting it it's a case of believing or choosing to live in unbelief it's you what does you stand here tonight where do you stand do you accept the god of the bible as the creator of all things the sustainer of all things the upholder of all things the governor of all things the director of all things and so on you had a minister in this pulpit last

Sunday night Sam Yach Nazar I heard him speaking on Friday evening I was speaking to him also for some part of the day and I was fascinated to hear the man as you know from the Middle East from Armenia with such a grasp of the confused situation that exists in the Middle East I was fascinated hearing this man speaking about so many of the Muslim factions for example and this is what he said a convert to the Christian faith an acceptor of the God of the Bible I believe he said that God is at work creating confusion amongst these people in the Middle East and I remember last year it was Royce Spraggett of Wake who said that the more that confusion reigned amongst that people the more doors were opening for the gospel to reach them whereas in the past when there was far more unity amongst them it was virtually impossible to get to them with the gospel you see the

Lord is reigning the Lord has a purpose and a glorious purpose for his own people in the church and that's the God that we believe in the God of the Bible who opposes and who directs and who governs all things he who is holy righteous just and good he who is infinite eternal unchangeable he who provided the only salvation that this world has ever heard through faith in the Son of God and Jesus Christ the God who is wise and powerful the God who does all things that's the God in whom we believe and isn't it significant that there were men in the Old Testament who didn't know as much about

God as you and I know tonight Abel didn't know as much about God as you do because you've got a complete revelation about Enoch didn't know as much about him and Abraham didn't know as much about him as you and I know and yet though they didn't see him as you and I don't see him either that didn't cast any uncertainty on the existence of God for these men nor does it do for you and for me oh I know that the devil will come and he'll tempt you there's no God I told the story in the Gaelic service this morning a man I heard some time ago telling this incident about a good Christian good a godly Christian in this part of the world in this island who went to a fellow Christian of his with a real problem he had an awful temptation and he confided in his

[33 : 48] Christian friend in this way he says I've got an awful temptation a terrible problem the devil is trying to prove to me that God doesn't exist this may be of help to some of you who are tempted at times with a same temptation there is no God and you know what answers Christian friends said to him I said to him don't you think that that temptation is peculiar to you there are many people who are tempted with the same thought but let me say this to you as long as you have that temptation no rust will form upon the will of your soul's activity because that temptation will keep you engaged in prayer to God of course the devil will say there is no

God he said it to better people than us of course there will some people come to your door and say ah you need more than the God of the Bible of course you'll get that the world that has always been the case in this world of course you'll be open to all these assaults and all these temptations but my friend there's only one answer to the enemy no matter how he comes we believe in the God who exists and the God who exists is the God who has revealed himself to me in his word and I know of no other that is the second thing about the Christian and the third and the final thing and I deal with it very very briefly is this he also believes that this

God rewards them that diligently seeking before I leave that I missed out one very important word in this verse some people may say to me ah but surely that's a very restrictive you and a very restricting you of the God in whom I am to believe you why is it only the God of the Bible I'll tell you because the Bible itself tells us this he that cometh unto God must believe that he exists there is no God he has no option but to believe the God of the Bible and what particular does he believe about this God that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him now of course this doesn't mean at all that we are rewarded by

God on the basis of the diligence of our seeking no it doesn't mean that the reward is of grace as the New Testament emphasizes and therefore whatever God gives to you and to me he gives solely from his grace and not because we merit it no matter how diligently you seek him on the other hand you will not receive unless you seek and you seek diligently to seek diligently to seek after God is to seek him out as it were to be so persistent that you refuse to let go and you search till you find him you feel after him and you want him and you will not be satisfied till you get him that's the kind of activity that this is speaking of the seeking is of such a nature because of the supreme place that the object of your search has in your affections you seek diligently because he is paramount in your affections nothing matters but

God nothing matters but God let me explain like me illustrate this I spoke earlier about conversion and you know just now about when your heart is moved to seek the Lord it may come suddenly upon you or it may be as it were over a period of time and it is almost a cumulative effect of the presence and the power of God operating in your life but have you noticed what it does it so operates in your life that nothing in the world is of such importance as this God you may be so ignorant of him and you may know little about how you are to seek him you may be looking here and there and everywhere else but all these things prove to you that something has happened and what has happened is this that the

[39 : 14] Lord has so influenced you in your seeking that you will never be satisfied till you find nothing matters but the one who alone can meet your need because now you recognize his worth now you seek him as one who is worth having and your desire and your longing is for him and God rewards such seeking as I said it is the reward of grace he rewards with favor he rewards with peace and may I say this one of the ways which the Lord rewards such people is that he keeps them seeking till they find and having found him he strengthens their seeking so that I would if I knew I have a good idea but I can't do it in the circumstances here tonight the oldest

Christian in this church tonight have an idea how it is if I were to ask that Christian to stand up or perhaps even to come up here beside me and to tell you what they are looking for tonight do you know what they would say they're looking for the same thing as you're looking for if you're a seeker after the Lord they're looking for the same Lord as you're looking for I think I told the story already it's crossed my mind so I'll tell you I think a preacher ought to love confiding in his people surely about the things of God I remember one of the first premise I ever attended in Glasgow I attended as a seeker after the Lord and I didn't want really all I wanted was just to get to that place when the service concluded meeting I went away from it as quickly as I could I thought I was the first to leave the place and I got down it was a party cross underground station and I waited there for the subway to take me to the place near the place where

I stayed and when I got down to platform I saw there and I couldn't figure out how he got there before me an elderly an old man a Christian man whom I recognized from my that wasn't my own congregation he was in the same meeting and he came up to me and he said to me how did you enjoy the meeting oh I said and I will remember what the preacher was preaching on we would see it help myself and within a year he was in eternity that's what I mean you see the

Christian here tonight what is he looking for he's looking for more of the Lord more of his favor more of his peace more of his presence more of his love more of his joy more satisfaction in the Lord it's always with the Christian more and more and more of the Lord they that diligently seek him he will reward and the person who comes to God believes that if he didn't believe that he wouldn't come there'd be no point in coming if he didn't believe that the Lord was capable and that the Lord was able to give what he asked for and what he discovers is that the Lord gives him more and more and more that he asked for more of his favor more of his life more of his blessedness the picking of here as a

Christian as it were looking seeking searching till he finds and the wonderful thing about the Christian life is this that the believer finds the Lord and discovers the Lord and gets to know the Lord in all kinds of circumstances and situations in his joys and in his sorrows in his ups and downs in his darkness and in his light listen to that cry of that man of God in the depths of his agony job oh that I knew where I might find that you cried tonight isn't a wonderful thought that there could be someone here tonight crying maybe for the first time in his life oh that I might find someone else in this building tonight nearing eternity with the same cry oh that

[44 : 46] I might find ah well my friend let me encourage you in your seeking and in your searching that there's a day coming when you will see what you don't see tonight with the eye of sense and with the eye of sight with another eye what what you see you see by faith the Lord has brought it before you and he has constrained you to go after it and constrained you to search and constrained to look and because of that you come to God you believe you come because you believe and you come as Enoch and Abel and Moses and all these people came to God my faith and the privilege yet awaits you the privilege that was given to this man of God

Enoch he walked with God in his search until a day came when as the old divines used to put it he walked so far he never came back he went into the immediate presence of God and you be encouraged when you're seeking after God that the day will yet dawn when you search will become of such a nature that you are there face to face in the presence of the one in whom you delighted to come and to whom you delighted to come while you were in this world may I close in asking you this question tonight what about yourself as you sit in this church here this evening what about yourself is this the habit of your life is this your delight is it your delight to come to God as he turned you around as he changed you as he laid his hand upon you and as he constrained you to seek him they that seek him will find him let us pray bless us and have mercy upon us guide us and direct us so that we might be well pleasing to thee in the life that we live may it be lived to the honor and to the glory of thy name oh lord we pray thee keep us seeking thyself and looking for thee for Jesus sake amen