WHAT CAN I DO TO PLEASE GOD?
Hebrews 11.1-6

HEB 11.1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was invisible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Intro
When it comes to getting by in this world- all of us believe- that we do our fair share. It seems we are always trying to please somebody…

- Husbands are trying to please wives
- Wives are trying to please husbands
- Employees are trying to please bosses
- Parents are trying to please children
- Children are trying to please teachers

Ques- After awhile, don’t you get the feeling like you are a doormat?

It’s like a merry-go-round that never ends

- From birth to death, we are always trying to please somebody
- And for many of us it seems we can never win

Small wonder why so many feel depleted, defeated, and disrespected

Illus- Rodney Dangerfield

I don’t know if you are Rodney Dangerfield fans, but respect was big for him too

- In fact, he made a career out of it
- You might recall how his stand-up comedy was always preceded by “...I get no respect…”

“I get no respect. I took my son to Coney Island, I said "wanna go in the crazy house?", he said "Naw, save your money, we'll be home soon"!”

“I get no respect. When I was a kid, I never went to Disneyland. My ol’ man told me Mickey Mouse died in a cancer experiment.”

I tell ya with girls, I don’t get no respect. I had a date with a girl, I waited two hours at the corner. A girl showed up. I said “Are you Louise?” She said, “Are you Rodney?” I said, “Yeah.” She said, “I’m not Louise.”

“When I was born I got no respect. The doctor told my mother, “I did all I could but he pulled through anyway”

Ques- Is it any wonder why people fly off the handle?

- They can’t keep up with all the people they are trying to please

But note who is constantly left out of the picture…

Ques- Isn’t it God?

- The mistake is common

I. Many Would Rather Live A Worldly Life That Complicates Their Lives- Not A Godly Life That Simplifies It
Illus- The Good Old Days

Ques- How many of you remember…?
  • Houses/Cars without air conditioning?
  • The telephone with a party line?
  • TVs that didn’t have a remote?
  • Churches where they used to open the windows to keep it cool?

Ques- What do you think- is life less complicated, or more complicated- than it used to be?
  • Do you see the risk?

2. We Can Be So Busy Living Life- That We Do Not Design Our Lives Around Jesus Christ

Ques- Do you believe we can be so busy- but actually accomplish very little?
  • They call that majoring on minors
  • And our attention spans are shrinking

Illus- Attention Deficit Disorder

Microsoft Corporation, did a study in 2015 on this
  • They wanted to study the effects on the average human attention span in an increasingly computerized world

Ques- Do you know what they discovered?
  • People now generally start to lose concentration after eight seconds
  • But guess what else they discovered?
  • The average attention span for a goldfish is nine seconds

Now, there is another level called focused attention- for us humans
  • This is the level of attention needed to produce results on a task over time
  • The average adult is 10 to 20 minutes

Ques- Is it any wonder that with all the goodies kids get in school these days- they still don’t learn any better than they used to?

Considering an average worship service is one hour- we are doing pretty good if no one walks out when the sermon starts!

We have been given so much- but still accomplish so little
  • We have continuous non-stop plumbing and electricity- but complain when the lights go out for an hour
  • We have cars to drive us anywhere we want to- but we sit more and more watching TV
  • We have worship services three times a week- and find it hard to show up just for one
  • We have more Bibles, more churches, more mission opportunities than ever before- yet we can’t even memorize John 3.16

Ques- And then we ask, What can I do to please God?
  • In today’s verse, this dilemma is faced head on

I. WHAT DOES YOUR FAITH LOOK LIKE? (vs. 1-2)

HEB 11:1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

This is a fair question, since we are following in the footsteps of the ancients
Sunday

- Another way to ask it is to say…

**Ques:** What were the ancients commended for?

1. **It Sees The “Future” In The “Present”**

We benefit from a lot these days
- Your ordinary “ancient Godly man” didn’t have what we have
- Life was considerably tougher, shorter, and more violent

But then you could say ours is beginning to look like that too…

**Illus:** Sherriff Nominee for Craven County

A few days ago I scheduled an appointment for Sherriff nominee for Craven County to come visit our church
- Like a lot of churches, we too are having to deal with a more violent world
- And since he is running for Sheriff of Craven county, we sought his opinion

It is sad to learn that more and more churches are retaining armed guards
- Not only for it members
- But also for its pastors
- He mentioned that pastors are a hard target, given that their messages are likely to offend someone
- Some pastors even have guards

By the way, I am hiring and taking applications
- Salary negotiable upon experience

**Ques:** Is this really our future?
- Where we can’t go to the grocery store?
- Or school?
- Or even a restaurant?

**Illus:** Four Killed By Gunman At Nashville Waffle House

Four Killed By Gunman At Nashville Waffle House
- A gunman killed at least four people at a Waffle House restaurant near Nashville, Tennessee
- The shooter, identified as Travis Reinking, 29, shot and killed two people in the parking lot
- He then entered the restaurant and opened fire, killing one and wounding another, who later died

**Ques:** What kind of world do we live in, that we cannot worship God without threat of violence?

2. **We Can Start By Being The Change We Wish To See**

This seems so obvious that it ought not be stated
- He ordains our path, if we respect it- he will bless it…
- Small steps of faith is all it takes

II. **WHAT DOES YOUR FAITH ACT LIKE? (vs. 3-5)**

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.
Pleasing God takes faith- but not just any kind of faith

- Faith needs to be properly directed
- Nor do we subscribe to “blind faith”

It needs to be the kind that God commends

- What is unique to me might not be unique to you
- For some, that might mean cleaning up some unfinished business
- For others, it might mean some heavy, inside work of confession

1. Either Way- Our Response Reflects The Depth And Weight Of Our Faith

**Illus- Lions Club**

I used to be a member of the Lion’s Club

- They focus on the blind
- They have a camp near Hickory called Camp Dogwood, and one year I went there to volunteer

You would be amazed what the blind can do

- Every day- three times a day- I helped them in the cafeteria
- But other than that- I took them shopping
- I took them water skiing
- I took them bowling

And just because they were blind didn’t men they didn’t like to have fun

They know they are blind- they don’t need to be reminded

- But here’s the thing about the blind
- Their eyes might not work, but their other senses work overtime

**Ques-** Have you heard about women’s intuition?

- Magnify that 100 times and you get the intuition, insight, and awareness of the blind
- They are not as helpless as you might think

They taught me a valuable lesson about faith

- Faith is not meant to be reflected upon, but to be acted upon
- Lastly, this last question might be the most important…

**III. WHERE DOES YOUR FAITH HAVE IMPACT? (vs. 6)**

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

This leads us back to the beginning

- Pleasing God is our goal
- And when it comes to faith… *We don’t see to believe- we believe to see*

**Illus-** What Our Faith Should See

It is the kind of faith that…

- …sees abundance and opportunity- where others might see adversity and trials
- …sees and accepts risk- knowing that faith in God never returns void
- …sees what’s been planted- and anticipates a harvest
- …sees the Godly path and follows it- and not the broad path that leads to failure
These things please God because they take faith.

Ques- Why do you do the things you do?
  • If we don’t know what pleases God- then how do we know if we are pleasing him at all?
  • You do realize that God can be angered too?

2. What We Are Striving For Is Impact

Ques- What kind of impact are you having on the world around you?
  • That doesn’t seem to be a driving question
  • We want conveniences- not inconveniences
  • We want pleasures of the flesh- not the joy in Jesus
  • We want the comforts of home- not adventures on the mission field
  • We want safety and stability- yet we have just as much violence today as in Christ’s day

Illus- Nukes

We gotta have impact, or we will blow up the world

Ques- Does anybody really think that if a nuke gets in the hands of one of these maniacs- they won’t use it?
  • Kim Jon Il- of North Korea
  • Hassan Rouhani- of Iran
  • Bashar al-Assad- of Syria

Conclusion

Ques- Maybe you have heard, *The road to hell is paved with good intentions*?
  • The world needs to see the unexpected, not just the expected- so they will do it too
  • That pleases God too

Ques- *What can I do to please God?*
  • Applies to you
  • Just do your best and God will do the rest
  • That’s all you gotta do
  • I promise you he will be pleased with you

End of Sermon Prayer

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