

God Is! God Is A Rewarder!

*“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a **rewarder** of those who diligently seek Him,”* Heb. 11:6.

Bible students in general regard Hebrews chapter eleven as being “the great faith chapter” of the Bible. The chapter begins with a definition of faith (v. 1); it sets forth the necessity of faith (v. 6), and it cites many examples of Old Testament worthies who “*by faith*” pleased God. The inspired writer mentioned Abel (v. 4), Enoch (v. 5), Noah (v. 7), Abraham (v. 8), Sarah (v. 11), Isaac (v. 20), Jacob (v. 21), Joseph (v. 22), Moses (v. 23), Rahab (v. 31), Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel and the prophets (v. 32), and countless other unnamed Heroes and Heroines of faith “*of whom*” he said “*the world was not worthy*” (Heb. 11:33-38) and who “*obtained a good testimony through faith*” (v. 39).

It is interesting that Hebrews chapter ten concludes with the affirmation that “*we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who **believe** to the saving of the soul,*” (Heb 10:39).

The inspired writer then set forth the true definition of faith; namely, that “*faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). Interestingly, “*substance*” in that verse is translated from the Greek *hupostasis*, which is a compound word consisting of *hupo* which means “under” and *stasis* which means “to stand.” Weust in **Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**, commenting on *hupostasis* (from which “*substance*” is derived), said “thus it speaks of the ground on which one builds a hope.”

Looking more closely to Heb. 11:1, we note that the writer defined faith as “*the substance of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.*” Thus true faith stands on solid ground; it is based on “*evidence,*” it includes hope, and it looks to “*things not seen.*” I have “*not seen*” God with the physical eye; I have “*not seen*” heaven with the physical eye, but I firmly believe that God exists, and the evidences of His existence are so many and so undeniable that sacred scripture says “*the fool has said in his heart, there is no God*” (Ps. 14:1)!

Let us now focus more clearly on our opening text, Heb. 11:6. The text says “*without **faith** it is impossible to please Him...*” Herein the writer lays down an axiomatic truth. He did not say “without faith it is **difficult** to please Him;” he said “*without faith it is **impossible** to please Him!*” Then he stated that “*he who comes to God must believe that **He is**,*” or that He exists. It is not that God was, or that God will be; the truth is this: God “**is**” — He is the eternal “**I AM**” (cf. Ex. 3:14). He is “*from everlasting to everlasting*” (Ps. 90:2). Reasoning from the effect back to the cause, the apostle Paul in Rom. 1:20 let it be known that the existence of “*the creation*” necessarily infers the existence of the **Creator!** Yes, if one “*comes to God*” he “*must believe that **He is**..*”

But that is not the end of the story; one who comes to God must also believe that

“He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Thank God for this! He exists! He is also *“a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!”* This means that God cares! He care for me! He cares for you! Barclay, in His comments on this verse, stated that “there were those in the ancient world who believed in the gods, but they believed that the gods lived out in the spaces between the worlds, entirely detached, entirely happy, entirely unaware of these strange animals called men.” Thankfully, however, the true God, the God Who *“is,”* is not “detached” from the human situation; He cares, and He is involved in our everyday existence. Indeed, *“every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning,”* Jas. 1:17. *“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust,”* Matt. 5:45. But the very epitome of the fact that God cares was evidenced in the sending of Jesus Christ into the world! No wonder John 3:16 is loved and quoted by so many; it says: *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

However, that is not the end of the story. According to our opening text, It says that *“he who comes to God must:”* (a) *“believe that He is,”* and (b) *“that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him,”* Heb. 11:6. The first part of this verse reveals the necessity of faith; however, it not salvation by faith only! *“Even the demons believe — and tremble”* (Jas. 2:19), but they are not saved! In fact, *“everlasting fire”* is *“prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41). In addition to believing that God *“is,”* we must also believe that *“He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him,”* Heb. 11:6. You will please note that it does not merely say that God is a rewarder of “those who seek Him;” to the contrary, it says He is *“a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”* How any honest, intelligent person could read this verse and then conclude that a person is saved by “faith alone” is beyond my comprehension! Yes, we must *“seek”* God. And we must *“diligently seek Him!”* Burton Coffman, in commenting on this text stated that: “Although the word diligently is not in the text, the meaning assuredly is; for, as Westcott wrote, ‘Wherever it occurs in the NT in the sense of ‘searching’ (the word for seek) suggests the notion of **strenuous** endeavor.’” (emphasis, mine, bw). And when one looks at surrounding examples in this chapter of Old Testament worthies who *“by faith”* pleased God, it is obvious that “strenuous” endeavor was involved. Was Abel, who *“by faith...offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”* (Heb. 11:4), saved by faith alone? Was Noah, who *“by faith...moved with godly fear,”* and *“prepared an ark for the saving of his household”* (Heb. 11:7), saved by faith alone? And what about the other examples in Hebrews 11 of those who *“by faith pleased God?”* In every instance, they demonstrated strong faith, and they *“diligently”* sought to please God! In each instance herein cited **saving** faith was an **obedient** faith, a working faith!

Yes, we must believe that God *“is.”* Yes, we must believe that God *“is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him,”* Heb. 11:6. And, yes, we must seek God on **His** terms — not our terms, All *“have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”* Rom. 3:23. Inasmuch as sin involves the transgression of the “law” of God, I John 3:4, then all sin is against God. And sin is what alienates or separates man from God, Isa. 59:1-2. Hence, God alone determines the conditions whereby sinners can obtain His forgiveness.

“Alien sinners” must *“diligently seek”* God, Heb. 11:6. Involved in seeking and coming to God is faith; one must **believe** that God *“is,”* that He exists, Heb. 11:6. One must **believe** in Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God, John 8:24; Matt. 16:16. Jesus said *“unless you repent*

*you will all likewise perish,” Luke 13:5. Jesus said “whoever **confesses** Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven,” Matt. 10:32. Jesus said “He who **believes and is baptized** will be saved...,” Mark 16:16. Study the book of Acts and summarize what alien sinners were commanded to do in order to be saved in this the Gospel age, and you will discover that they were commanded to: Believe, repent, confess faith in Jesus Christ, and be Baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 16:31, 17:30; 22:16, etc.).*

Sadly, those who have been baptized “*into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27), also sin (I John 1:8), so they, too, must make the needed correction in their hearts and lives. They must “confess” their sins, I John 1:9; and they must “repent and pray” unto God for forgiveness, Acts 8:22. All sins — the sins of “alien sinners,” and the sins of those who have obeyed the gospel, are an offense to God, and they must be dealt with on God’s terms. God is the Creator. We are the created.

Hence, we don’t tell God how we want to be saved; we don’t devise our own terms of pardon.

But we should be so thankful that God longs for our salvation (2 Pet. 3:9), and that “*He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*,” Heb. 11:6. Praise God for His great love, His rich mercy, and His amazing grace!

*** -Bobby

Witherington