**Earnestly Seek Him**

Hebrews 11:1-7

Key Verses 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.”

**Introduction**

 Through our 2015 Summer Bible Conference, we have learned Abraham’s faith. We would like to maintain our faith continually. For the next four weeks, we will study Hebrew 11 and 12:1-3. May the Lord help us to learn from men and women of faith in the old testament who are mentioned in Hebrew. Especially we are not supposed to shrink back in difficult times, but more than conquerors in earnestly seeking to please God by faith.

1. Read verses 1-3. Why does the author focus on faith here by saying, “now”? (10:38-39) How is faith defined? (1) Why did God commend the ancients? (2) How can we understand God’s creation? (3; Jn 1:1-3; Gen 1; Ro 1:19-20)

1-1, Read verses 1-3.

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 visible.

1-2, Why does the author focus on faith here by saying, “now”? (10:38-39)

 ***And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” 39 But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.***

* Also the author urged in 10:38, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.”
* Having received a precious faith in Jesus, we need to learn to live by faith in the real world.
* In brief, let us think about **the overview of the book of Hebrew.**
* The book of Hebrews was written mainly to the Hebrew believers. The author is anonymous, although either Paul or Barnabas was traditionally accepted as the author.
* It was written approximately 67 A.D. Its purpose was to present the Lord Jesus Christ as perfect and superior in comparison to anything Judaism and the old covenant had to offer.
* The author was writing to a group of Christians who were under intense persecution and some were contemplating a return to Judaism. He admonished them not to turn away from their only hope of salvation.
* In chap. 1-10:18, the author repeatedly demonstrates Jesus Christ as preeminent over the angels, “let all the angels of God worship Him” (1:6); over Moses, “He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (3:3); over the Old Testament priesthood, “being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:10).
* The writer explains that the New Covenant is greater than the Old Covenant because Jesus was the perfect, permanent sacrifice, rather than the Old Testament sacrifices.
* In chapters 10:19-13, the writer explains that Faith is superior to the work of the Old Covenant.
* **Especially 10:22 reads, “**let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings,”
* He writes, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1).
* Faith in Jesus Christ is our source of salvation because He is “the author and perfecter of faith” (12:2).

**Habakkuk 2:4 reads,**

“See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness

**Romans 1:17 reads,**

 “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.””

**Galatians 3:11 reads,**

 “Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”

1-3, How is faith defined? (1)

 ***Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.***

 ***Now faith is confidence in what we hope for***

* Just as our physical eyesight is the sense that gives us evidence of the material world, **faith** is the "sense" that gives us evidence of the invisible, spiritual world.
* Faith has its reasons; the reasons can't be measured in a laboratory; they have to be understood spiritually.
* Here the word “confidence” also means that which provides the basis for trust and reliance; it is from the Greek word which means “title deed.”
* Title deed means, *“a legal deed or document constituting evidence of a right, especially to ownership of property.”*
* Likewise this faith is something we possess as our own, though we do not see it. It is not vague, but certain, based on what God has promised.
* So this faith is not a blank check to demand from God what we desire. Rather, it is rooted in hope based on God’s promises.

***Faith is also the assurance of what we do not see.***

* Here the word “assurance” comes from the Greek “elenchos” (ἔλεγχος), which means *“convicting evidence that makes someone fully agree, understand and realize the truth or validity of something.”*
* Though we do not see God or spiritual realities with our eyes, we are certain of their existence.
* If you have the substance before you or if you can see it, there is no use for **faith**. Faith is needed for what we *can't* see and *can't* touch.
* God is Spirit; he is unseen. So, without faith, we cannot see God.
* Faith is spiritual eyesight that sees invisible realities.

**1 Corinthians 2:13 reads,**

 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words”

**Ephesians 1:18a reads,**

 “I pray that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened…”

1-4, Why did God commend the ancients? (2)

***This is what the ancients were commended for.***

* King James Version reads, “For by it the elders obtained a good report.”
* The great examples of godliness all had different circumstances and personalities, but they all had one thing in common - faith.
* These Jewish Christians were now discouraged and thought of giving up their faith on Jesus.
* They needed **a good testimony(report)**, and so they needed these examples of faith to break them out of discouragement.
* Also New American Standard Bible(NASB) reads, “For by it the men of old gained approval.”
* The word “commended” means that God approved of them.
* In the world people approve of those with power, money and social status. But God approves of people who have faith in him.

1-5, How can we understand God’s creation? (3; Jn 1:1-3; Gen 1; Ro 1:19-20)

 ***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. (3)***

***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (Jn 1:1-3)***

***19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Rm 1:19-20)***

 ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.(Gn 1:1)***

***And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.(Gn 1:3)***

***God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Gn 1:31)***

* Human beings ask fundamental questions, including: “Where did everything come from, including me?” “What is the meaning of my life?”
* When faith in God is planted in our hearts, it informs us that God created the heavens and the earth by the word of his mouth.
* With this faith, we can know for sure that we came from God and go back to God. We can find the meaning and purpose of creation.
* This wonderful understanding comes only by faith.

**Psalm 33:6 & 9 reads,**

 “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. **9** For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”

**Romans 11:36 reads,**

 “For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

1. Read verses 4-5. How was Abel’s faith characterized? (4; Gen 4:4-5; 1Jn 3:12) How does Abel’s faith still speak to us today? Who was Enoch? (5; Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14) How did he “please God”?

2-1, Read verses 4-5.

 **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.

 2-2, How was Abel’s faith characterized? (4; Gen 4:4-5; 1Jn 3:12)

 ***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. (4)***

***And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Gen 4:4-5)***

***Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. (1 Jn 3:12)***

* Abel lived just after the Fall. His parents had the sweet memory of fellowship with God in the garden, but were now separated due to their sin.
* It was a question whether there was a way back to God. Then Abel and Cain brought offerings to worship God. God accepted Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s.
* God commended Abel as righteous. The acceptance of the offering was evidence that God accepted the person. Cain’s offering was not accepted because he himself was not first accepted.

2-3, How does Abel’s faith still speak to us today?

* In this way God showed us that there is a way to be approved by him; it is by faith. Abel was murdered by Cain. Even though he is dead, by faith he still speaks.
* Right off with his example of Abel, the writer reminds us that faith is not necessarily rewarded on earth.
* But God Himself testifies to the righteousness of the faithful. Abel's blood still speaks to us, reminding us of the value of eternity.
* Again those who are made righteous by faith can **never** be silenced by death.
* The only thing that can silence those made righteous by faith is if they **choose** to shrink back and give up their faith.
* This is why we must never shrink even if it means we must endure death. Jesus promised,

 Revelation 2:10 reads,

“Be faithful even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life.”

2-4, Who was Enoch? (5; Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14)

 ***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. (5)***

 ***When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. 24 Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. (Gen 5:21-24)***

 ***Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones. (Jude 14)***

2-5, How did he “please God”?

* Enoch’s life was summarized as “walked with God.”
* Enoch must have boldly prophesied that God was sending the Lord, with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.
* We can also imagine when Enoch prophesied, the ungodly spoke harsh words against him, but Enoch didn’t take it personally. He knew they were actually speaking these harsh words against the Lord.
* He took him up to be with him. His family looked for him but he could not be found. God’s reward to Enoch teaches God rewards those who earnestly and persistently seek God.
1. Read verse 6-7. What is necessary in order to please God? Why is it so important to please God? (Gen 1:31; Rm 1:21; Rm 8:8; Eph 5:10) What does it mean that God “exists” and “rewards” (Ex 3:14; Gen 15:1) How was Noah’s faith marked? Why do you think his faith condemned the world?

3-1, Read verse 6-7.

 **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.

**7** By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

3-2, What is necessary in order to please God?

* The author emphasizes that we can please God only by faith; there is no other way.
* Sometimes we think that by doing some activity faithfully, God will be pleased. But God is not moved by our outer activity; God sees our hearts.
* People see results, but God sees the inner motives of the heart. God is pleased when his people recognize who he truly is and trust him from their hearts.
* According to the author, there are two elements that faith must have in order to please God: that God exists and that God rewards those who earnestly seek him.

3-3, Why is it so important to please God? (Gen 1:31; Rm 1:21; Rm 8:8; Eph 5:10)

***God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Gn 1:31)***

 ***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Rm 1:21)***

***The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. (Rm 8:6-8)***

***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. (Ephesians 5:8-10)***

* Although we are one of His creatures, thankfully we are blessed to live a life to please Him from the beginning.
* How can I please the Lord Almighty who is self sufficient?
* It is possible to follow his command by giving my whole heart, soul, and strength.
* In the flow of the context, it seems that this verse has to do with Enoch’s life of faith. So let us revisit the passage about him. (Jude 14-23)

 “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones **15** to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” **16** These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. **17** But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. **18** They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” **19** These are the people who divide you, **who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.** **20** But you, **dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,** **21** keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. **22** Be merciful to those who doubt; **23** save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

* How he lived shows a good example for us to follow.
* He received the word of God seriously and denied his flesh desires in order to live in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
* Keeping his most holy faith was the very answer to how to please the Lord Almighty.

3-4, What does it mean that God “exists” and “rewards” (Ex 3:14; Gen 15:1)

***God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (Exo 3:14)***

***After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” (Gen 15:1)***

* The word “exists” is related to God’s existence as revealed to Moses when God said, “I am who I am.”
* God met Moses personally and showed himself to be living, eternal and almighty.
* This God is concerned about his people and redeems them from miserable bondage.
* This God is holy, loving and good. Moses surrendered to this God and lived as his servant the rest of his days.
* We can believe this God exists when we meet him. When we do, the eyes of faith enable us to penetrate beyond the surface of things to perceive the good purpose of an almighty God at work even in the most difficult times.
* Another aspect of faith that pleases God is that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
* Some people think that to seek a reward from God is dishonorable. But when we do not seek a reward from God, we may seek a reward from people. Moreover, we may suffer from a sense of loss.
* What is God’s reward? God’s reward is eternal life and his kingdom. Furthermore, it is God himself according to Genesis 15.
* To freely come to God and have fellowship with God is a great reward.
* Nothing is more precious reward for our spiritual and physical children that meeting God in person, especially in this confusing and wicked times.
* When heroes of faith believed that God rewards them, they could overcome all kinds of hardships and live a victorious life.

3-5, How was Noah’s faith marked?

 ***By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.***

* Building an ark is not a small matter. It was huge and required a great investment of time and resources; it required his life’s devotion for 120 years.
* Thank God Noah wasn’t a man of endless/colorful excuses.
* The people of Noah’s time ignored God’s message of judgment and went on eating and drinking as though they would enjoy this world forever.
* Then one day God told Noah: “Go into the ark.” Noah obeyed and took his family and all the animals into the ark. Once in, the Lord shut him in.
* The terrible day God had warned would surely come, had come. No one on the outside of the ark could get in.
* They were screams of terror and desperate pleas to rescue them from the great flood engulfing everything around them.
* Noah was mocked as a foolish old man. But when the judgment came, he was proved as a righteous and wise man.
* His faith might be characterized by his obedience. His faith as well as his actions were well balanced.

James 2:22-24 reads,

 **“**You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.**23** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. **24** You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

3-6, Why do you think his faith condemned the world?

 ***By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.***

* By faith he built an ark to save his family and condemned the world and became the heir of righteousness.
* There is no direction mentioning about how he preached in the book of Genesis.
* However 2 Peter 2:5 reads, “if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others”
* His godly life and his holy fear must have been a powerful influence to the people of the times.

Matthews 24:38 reads,

 “For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;”

**Conclusion**

 “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.” Praise the Lord our Creator God who created us to please Him and find eternal meaning and true happiness. Help us to increase our faith continually so that we may bring many lost souls into Jesus’ sheep pen. Amen.

**One word: Earnestly seek Him!**