

Faith And The Christian Fight (Part 4)

Our Need to and Reward for Diligently Seeking God

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Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

When we left off two weeks ago we were examining Enoch's walk with God. At the beginning of that sermon I posed the question as to why God initiates and carries forth His creative work through grace, and I got two major reasons. The first is, because the wages of sin is death, and no one ever can or ever will work purely enough to erase that charge against him, grace must be used. Thus through grace and its package of gifts, God levels the playing field so that every one of the called has the possibility of continuing life on through the grave.

He also allows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to be applied to a repentant called-out one, and in addition, He accounts the righteousness of Jesus Christ as being in that person. This permits one into God's presence, thus beginning a relationship with Him, and in this manner one's journey to the Kingdom of God is jump-started.

A second reason is that by doing His spiritual creation in this manner, it puts the called-out one completely in debt to God. For those who understand, this is very humbling to a proud man whose carnality is so strong that it actually believes that it can accomplish salvation by itself. Romans 8:7 says our carnality is not subject to God's law, and indeed cannot be made subject to it. So brethren, the truth is, that without the humility of a changed attitude toward God, one will not submit to God. This is why people of serious theological intellect can grasp biblical truths, and yet will not keep them.

For example, people can grasp that the Sabbath is to be kept, and yet their carnality will devise a justification for *not* keeping it, and they will not choose to humble themselves to do it. Carnality's major defense is self-justification. It fears, it hates, it detests having to submit. It blames God, the church, the ministry, brethren, parents, the boss, the company, genetics, circumstances, or whatever is conveniently at hand, in order to deflect blame for doing or feeling as it does. However, humility is a choice that the godly will exercise because they see God in the whole picture.

As we left off, we were examining why and how one walks with God. You might recall I

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read the whole chapter of Ephesians 3 to show why we believe this way, why this has happened to us, that it is completely God's work. Then in Colossians 3 we showed what those who have this calling *do* in order to walk with God. "If you then be in Christ, seek those things which are above." That is what the godly will do.

Hebrews 11:6 adds "But without faith it is impossible to please him." Despite this, many through the ages have attempted to do so through their religiosity. Brethren, there is a very large number of religious people. Cain is the Bible's first example of this. There is nothing in the Scripture that indicates that he was not religious.

In fact, Genesis 4:3 indicates that he and Abel met with God at a set time. An arrangement had been made, and he was there. This gives the sense of something appointed and agreed upon. Cain is a type of the typical, worldly, religious person. This Cain-like person has God somewhat in mind, but he does not believe that God really means all that He says, and so what does he do? He picks and chooses, thus showing that there is a major unbridgeable gap in his faith.

I am going to give you seventeen things that the Bible says regarding faith's importance to salvation. Every one of them applies during the sanctification period of one's Christian life. The first one is going to be taken from Romans 5:1-2. It is one of the best-known of all these factors.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

There are four of them right there.

Faith justifies us before God.

Faith makes peace with God possible.

Faith provides hope of the glory of God.

It is through faith that we gain acceptance before God.

Romans 4:20 He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

(5) Faith glorifies God by its conduct.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We have read this verse a couple of times already, but it says very distinctly and clearly that:

(6) Faith pleases God, and He will reward it. It not only pleases Him, He will reward it.

We are going to go back into the Old Testament to Isaiah 38:3. The speaker is Hezekiah.

Isaiah 38:3 Remember now, O LORD, I beseech you, how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart [actually the word "sincere" heart fits better there—a good translation of the Hebrew word], and have done that which is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

(7) If faith in God is there, it issues forth in humble and loyal sincerity.

The next one is from Ephesians 2:8—one of the better-known of all of these.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

(8) By grace and through faith the convicted and repentant sinner is saved.

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

(9) It is by faith that Christ dwells in our hearts.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

(10) It is by faith we *live*.

Romans 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

(11) It is by faith that we stand before God.

II Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

(12) So we live, we stand, we walk by faith.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

(13) It is by faith that Satan is successfully resisted.

The next one is from Acts 26. It may require a bit more of a context to really catch this. The speaker is Jesus. Paul is recounting what was said to him whenever Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Paul's responsibility under Jesus Christ was:

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

(14) It is by faith that we are *experientially* sanctified.

"Experientially" in this case means by experience in daily life, walking with Him. There is a sanctification that begins when we are justified, but it only begins then. Sanctification continues, and the sanctification continues by faith.

Ephesians 3:11-12 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with

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confidence by the faith of him.

What makes this one particularly interesting is the word "boldness." Believe it or not, it literally means:

(15) We have freedom of speech before God. We can actually talk with Him, and He listens.

I Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.

(16) It is by faith that we fight the good fight that these sermons have been about.

I John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

(17) It is by faith that the world is overcome.

The overriding lesson of Enoch's life is that, as important as justification is, it is only a beginning. It is another thing altogether to carry faith into the realm of a life lived.

It is in the sanctification period, and the cost of being a living sacrifice to God, that drives the human nature to defend itself by putting forth all kinds of self-justifications. It is sanctification, believe it or not, which motivates people to come up with doctrines like the "eternal security" doctrine, and the "Once saved, always saved" and the "no-works" doctrines, because they begin to realize they cannot do it. They cannot do what sanctification requires. They cannot really live their faith, so human nature comes up with reasons why they cannot do it.

Enoch literally lived a life a faith in which the central issue, his driving force, was his faith in God. That is why he is in Hebrews 11.

If you will look at the entirety of this in a spiritual sense, you are going to see a truth that is exceedingly important to humility, and that even as Enoch's physical translation from one geographical area to another was supernatural, so is the spiritual translation from a carnal and earthly-centered person to a God/Christ/Kingdom of God-centered person

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supernatural. It does not just happen because a person has an intellect. It happens because God does something.

The Bible shows that one's heart is the source of one's motivation, and for one's heart to function by faith is entirely based in what God *only* makes possible through His calling. It is this the Bible refers to as "the circumcision made without hands." To live by faith is what pleases God, but one can only have that faith and thus the motivations that produce what He wants that pleases God when God *supernaturally* translates one into the beginning stages of His realm of living, called in the Bible "eternal life."

Hebrews 11:6 is a scriptural bridge that applies directly to either Enoch or Noah. As we begin today with Noah, there is a scripture I want you to look at that is not in the book of Hebrews. It is in Matthew 24. Jesus is speaking, and He says:

Matthew 24:36-39 But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

I wanted to touch on those verses because Noah is an exceptionally picturesque and vivid example for you and me, because he lived in an end-time before the world was destroyed. You know, at least off the top of your head, some of the things Genesis 6 says about what it was like during that period of time where violence filled the earth. Is it happening today?

There are wars and rumors of wars constantly. Every day when you tune into your radio and television you are hearing about war. You are hearing about violence. You are hearing about sickness. You are hearing about death from a multitude of causes. You are hearing about upsets in the weather. You are hearing about tidal waves, hurricanes, tornadoes; you name it. We are living in a time which gives every appearance of being an end-time. This could not be more timely for us to examine a man who spent 120 years of his life in the very worst of the period that led up to the flood.

You think you are going through stress? You are. You think it is not wearying to live at this time? You know it is, because you know that you are going to be hit with bad news everywhere you turn. But how long do you have to face this compared to Noah? Are you

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aware that he probably faced a longer period of testing than maybe anybody in the whole Bible, except maybe Abraham or maybe possibly also Isaac? I do not know. It is simply because their lives lasted so long.

To give you an example about Abraham, if God called him at the age of 75, and he died at 175, his period of testing was around 75 years. Let us be generous. Let us give him 25 years more on top of that where God was working with him in Mesopotamia before He led him out to go to the land of Canaan. That is 100 years. One hundred twenty-five years were just coming up on what we know for sure Noah was facing, and he had to build something in the face of the kind of people that are described in Genesis 6.

It might also seem strange, that instead of going to Hebrews 11 again, we are going to go back into the Old Testament where Noah's name appears again in the book of Ezekiel. This is fascinating. Before I start reading this, how would you like God to say this about you, to give this testimony of your life?

Ezekiel 14:13-20 Son of man, when the land sins against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: [That sounds like "end-time," does it not?] Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord God. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it so that it be desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts: Though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land so that I cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

We are looking at the names of three very unusually so, singularly so, righteous men. Is it possible that God is witnessing to us that these three are the most righteous men who ever lived in all of man's history—Noah, Daniel, and Job?

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I did a little bit of research. Daniel's name appears in the Bible 81 times. That is quite a number. Job's name appears 59 times. Noah's name appears 51 times, which is the least of the three. But why is he listed first?

When we look in Hebrews 11:7, Noah is given only one verse, and so when we look at it we can go—zip!—right by there and not think this man was significant in any way except he built a big barge. We turn back to Ezekiel, and there he is, listed among men we know from other experiences in other parts of the Bible, were awfully righteous men.

Now, did God list them chronologically? He starts off with Noah, and we know for sure chronologically Noah came first, but did you notice that Daniel appears before Job, and Job probably, from the research that has been done by people, lived about 1,000 years before Daniel. So they are not listed chronologically; but Noah is listed first.

I think we understand that God usually puts things in the order that He wants, and He wants to draw attention to Noah first. Does it mean that Noah was the most righteous of the three? I do not know the answer to that. I can only give you things to let you guess regarding it.

I bring this up again because I want you to think about when Noah lived. We think we are really having a hard time in the end time, and yet here God puts forth the name of a man we know for sure was exceedingly righteous, and he lived in the same kind of times that we do. Now what are our justifications for not being righteous like Noah was righteous? I think that his life are justifications away. Now if he did it, why cannot we? It is a challenge.

Noah is no insignificant human being. In the eyes of God, he is *exceedingly* significant. So is Daniel. So is Job. So are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He has a very high ranking before God, and God's opinion of him is something to consider anyway. I do not know whether one was more righteous than the other. At the very least, they are respected together by God.

Back in Hebrews 11 again, and even the verses that precede Noah's appearance there are pretty innocuous until one begins to look at them a lot more closely. It is very easy for us to look at them and go our way almost as a matter of course, thinking about Christian life and salvation. But I want to tell you something. To this world's Christianity, these two verses—verses 6 and 7—are disruptive to their thinking. They produce for those men and women a great deal of perplexity.

Hebrews 11:6-7 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that

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comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

One commentator I used in my research said the following as he began his exposition on these two verses. Listen to this:

Those verses we are now to engage our attention are by no means free of difficulty, especially unto those who attack under a ministry which has failed to preserve the balance between divine grace and divine righteousness.

Now, why would he say this? I will tell you why. It is because these two verses almost single-handedly virtually destroy two of the most treasured teachings of this world's Christianity. The one is the doctrine of eternal security, (or as most people call it, the "Once saved always saved" doctrine), and the other one is the "no works" doctrine.

Did you notice the tail-end of that quote? ". . . especially unto those who attack under a ministry which has failed to preserve the balance between divine grace and divine righteousness." Preachers who fail to maintain the balance so strongly emphasize God's favor (His grace) that they ignore God's claim on our life—that is, what our duties and our responsibilities are before Him—because He owns us. Once the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to us, and we accept it for the forgiveness of sin, we are no longer our own. We belong to Him. He has a claim on our life, and He has every right and the authority to tell us exactly what He wants us to do. The emphasis is on the word "do"—action. Just believing that He is, is not enough, as we shall see as we go along.

For any thinking person who comprehends these verses, they severely undercut the preacher's claims that appear to him to be the guarantee of grace. How can this be? Because verse 6 really tells us that God rewards those who live by faith, and then verse 7 equally clearly tells us that the reward given is that Noah and his house were saved because of what they did. Let that sink in. This shakes them to the bone, and they want to try to get around it.

I will make it real simple. Noah was saved because he did **works**. If this is so simple, what if he did not build the boat? Can you see that God is establishing a parallel between being saved physically, and also saved spiritually? Those commentators had

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enough humility to see that at least, and it is very difficult for them to get around that.

Where is the grace in that verse? Well, it is not there, and yet it is there, as we shall continue to go on.

I want you to remember something I said, and so I am going to repeat it. I said earlier that these verses *almost* destroy the eternal security and no works doctrine. Not completely. They do not.

Well, the answer to that "almost" is that the whole story is not here in these verses, but they are so troublesome—very troublesome, to say the least—to those who are of the "no works" stripe. The person is clearly ignoring what the verses are saying. At the very least they are saying that a person's works play a significant part in the person's salvation.

Now let us go in a little bit different direction here, because we are really going to tear these verses apart. They are critical to understand in the area of faith and salvation. Notice that verse 6 says "for he that comes to God." We are going to go to I Peter 2 because Peter used a similar phrase in what he wrote here.

I Peter 2:3-4 If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

"To whom coming" is the same sort of phrase that is used in Hebrews 11:6.

"Coming to God" means "He that approaches God." Or, we can expand that out a little bit further from that and still be true with the words, "He that **seeks** God," that it includes "He that **walks** with God."

This phrase—" . . . he that comes to God," or "coming to God"—signifies fellowship with God. That is its ultimate point. The person who comes to God, the person who walks with God, the person who is seeking God, is doing this on the basis of a fellowship that has been established.

The Bible goes on to show that there are actually three different stages of "coming to God." The first is when God calls. Then what do we do? We draw near. See, we are coming to God. We draw near to Him as a result of what He has done. This ends in our justification and the imputing of Christ's righteousness to us.

The second is more a continuous coming. This occurs during sanctification as we seek to be like Him, to be conformed to His image, to have His laws written and engraved into our character. That is the second one in which justification shifts gears, and we become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. We are coming to God in order to be conformed.

The third occurs at the resurrection of the dead when we are glorified.

There are three clear stages to this "coming to God," and it is no insignificant thing.

We are going to go to Ephesians 4:17. Paul is showing here why Christians are distinctly different from others. Remember that Paul is writing to converted Gentiles.

Ephesians 4:17-20 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ.

The point is this: God made a distinction between one Gentile and another, and nobody comes to God, nobody seeks the God of the Bible until they become aware of their need of Him. God has to do this. Nobody comes to God until they realize that they are away from Him, out of His favor, in fact under His condemnation and separated from the quality of life that is called in the Bible "eternal life."

This is what separates Christians from everybody else. They see things in the eyes of their understanding that others do not perceive. The others are therefore not motivated, but the Christian is motivated because he becomes aware of his need, and only God makes this coming to Him possible, and it makes them different.

We are going to see a parable in the book of Luke that Jesus used that kind of illustrates this in a broad way. This is the Parable of The Prodigal Son. Watch the progression of the change of mind, of the change of heart that takes place as he begins to see his need.

Luke 15:14-15 And when he [the prodigal son] had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to

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feed swine.

Now remember that we are talking about some Jews here. That would be very embarrassing to have to go and feed the swine. To make it doubly embarrassing would a Jew be ranching porkers out there. He was doing this for a Gentile boss. His need is being ratcheted up.

Luke 15:16-17 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, . . .

That is a Hebraism that has been typed in Greek language. It means "when he repented." As he began to see his lack, and that lack became more and more distinct to him as to where his lack could be satisfied, he came to himself. It means really, as we shall see, that "he turned toward his father."

Luke 15:17-19 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. And am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.

Look at the humility that is there now. He is ready to live with and work with his dad and his brother.

When we understand what we are as we just saw in the book of Hebrews about this "coming to God" and put it together with other things, we see a very clear and distinct picture of why it is that we come to God in the first place. It is God, in His calling, that makes us aware not only that He exists, but aware of our need for a relationship with Him.

It is He that puts this urge within us to go back, as it were, to our Father. To draw near to Him and commit our life, in humility, to Him, and even to be a hired servant regardless of what we were before. The Prodigal Son was a privileged son of a wealthy father, and he needed to be made aware of his need so that he would make the move voluntarily to come back to his father.

I want to go to the book of Ephesians again because Paul continued what he was

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saying there, and it reaches a very interesting point because he then begins to tell these people what they needed to do in order to walk with God, things they needed to work on and overcome. One of the things he says is:

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit here is God Himself. I want you to notice that He personally is hurt, sorrowed, grieved by the sinful neglect of His gift. Remember, this is being written to people who were already Christians, and Paul is reminding them not to grieve God. We think maybe He does not have any feelings. He does! There is evidence right in the book that He has feelings about our actions, or our lack thereof, and so we grieve Him.

Once that sense of need is given, God intends that it be a continuous impulse unless we stifle it, and that is what grieves Him. We have the power to resist Him. It usually does not happen because we are fighting it tooth and toenail. It usually happens very gradually through neglect. It is something that just sneaks up on us because we get caught up in the around and the about of our world, making a living or whatever it might be. But God intends, as II Corinthians 5:7 shows, that this impulse and walking with Him be a continuous operation from the time we are sanctified till the time we are in the Kingdom of God.

In order to reinforce this, we have to go back in thought to Hebrews 11:6 once again, because it says there: "for he that comes to God must believe that He is." What Paul wrote there is a great deal more than just merely assenting to the vague fact of a first-cause that the term is used very frequently. "Yeah! I believe in God," as a first cause, that He created everything, and then He stepped back and is watching His creating go on, and He does not seem to be intervening, or whatever. And so they make that justification.

What we need to understand is that in the New Covenant, we are dealing with a vital, dynamic, living, super-intelligent, loving, giving, serving, trustworthy Personality. He is a Being with **feeling**. We just read He can be grieved, sorrowed, because of neglect and the wasting of the gift of forgiveness and of His Spirit. The verse that says, "for he that comes to God must believe that He is," means to believe in His character as He reveals Himself in His Word, and because of His works. I want you to see the verse in John 14 where Jesus said this. This is one of the first things Jesus said after the Passover service was over when He was asked a question.

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John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

That is, the works being what He said and what He did.

God's character is one of the major reasons why we must continue to seek Him so that our concept of His character, our understanding of it, can be continually sharpened and refined and enlarged.

An honest evaluation of God's works—the most obvious thing is the creation itself, the earth itself and all that is therein—can have a very positive effect on one's faith if one is honestly evaluating what we are able to see. Really, in a way, most of us can only scratch the surface here, but it still ought to impact on our mind in such a way to produce a very valuable spiritual quality.

We need to think and meditate upon what God has made. Its beauty. Its power. Its providence. How everything has been put together in a wonderful manner to support life for you and me, that we might have the opportunity to be in His Kingdom. His wonders go on endlessly. The more closely we look at them, the more fabulous they become.

Do you know what honest evaluation and meditation just in the narrow areas that we are capable of can produce? It has something to do with faith. It is conviction, where we know that God is more than a vague Being who is out there in deep space somewhere, but He is somebody who is deeply and dynamically actively involved in the operations of His creation, and with us personally—that He has that much power within Himself to be able to keep track of what is going on in *your* life. I do not know how He does it, but He tells me in His Word that He does know what is going on in our lives.

If we do not do this, at least to some degree (and I hope that you will give it a fair shot), what is likely to happen is that instead of coming up with conviction of Him as a Creator who is actively involved in your life, you will be chasing a vague phantom of your own imagination, and that will become your god. I kid you not.

This is why we absolutely have to seek Him constantly. As I mentioned in that sermon I gave at the Feast ["God, the Church's Greatest Problem"], and kind of repeated the phrase again later on, where the man said God is the most difficult thing for the church to deal with—God Himself—because it is something we need to be preoccupied with all the time.

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David said in the psalm that the difference between the converted and the unconverted is that with the unconverted, "God is not in *all* their thoughts." Do you not think that David was able to write those psalms because he thought about God, and that he kept expanding his understanding because he was seeking after God constantly? God was responding by giving David understanding of what He, God, was like. David was able to understand and write those psalms because God was in communication with him, and David was open to that communication because he was seeking God. He did not do it perfectly, but he was used mightily in that way.

Let us go back to Hebrews 11 again. I am going to read those three verses together.

Hebrews 11:5-7 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God [seeking God] must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Those three verses have a reward aspect with the duty aspect. It is man's duty to respond to God in the way Abel did in order for there to be justification. It is man's duty to respond to God the way Enoch did, and to spend his lifetime walking, continually seeking God.

Noah takes us one step further. Noah not only walked with God, he *served* God. He dedicated his life to following God's command to him, which was to build the ark, and because he did that, he and his family were saved.

So you see a balance there. You begin with Abel. You proceed through Enoch, and then you go on to Noah, and it sort of encapsulates the salvation process right there: faith: justification; walking: sanctification; serving God while sanctification is going on: salvation.

A summary of these three verses is that walking with God, seeking God by faith, requires the works of keeping God in mind, combined with making the effort of obedience and any sacrifices of time, energy, and the rejection by worldly family, friends, and business associates; but these result in being rewarded by God.

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I mentioned earlier that losing touch with God is not really something we do—"Bang!"—just like that. It is something that we slide into, and we tend to neglect God. He speaks about this very often in the Old Testament, and I want to go to the book of Psalms as we introduce this subject. Here is what we have to avoid: the neglect of responsibility.

Psalm 50:5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

We are living sacrifices. We have made a covenant with God. This psalm is addressed directly to us. Even though it was also directed at the Israelites, it applies to us too. If you read the whole psalm, you can see that God is really upset.

Psalm 50:22 Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

There is the issue. Man finds it very easy to forget God. He neglects Him. He gets caught up in the around and the about, his work, whatever. But neglecting God is dangerous business.

We are going to go now to Psalm 78. This is an overview of God's relationship with Israel while they were in the wilderness.

Psalm 78:39-42 For he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

Israel has a history of forgetting God.

Let us go to Proverbs 8:17. This is positive advice from Solomon. This is where wisdom is personified as a being. It is really God speaking.

Proverbs 8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

The word translated there "early" literally means "busily." It can be translated "diligently," but it has another little implication within it, and that is why the translators used the word "early." It means "that to which you give first priority." Early in the morning would be an application. It is not a command that everybody do their approaching to God the first thing in the morning, but the word has that meaning to it, and it means that God loves those that make Him their first priority. Interesting.

Let us go now to Psalm 119. I do not know who wrote Psalm 119. Some think that there are indications here that Jeremiah wrote it. I do not know, but whoever did it said the following:

Psalm 119:10 With my whole heart have I sought you: O let me not wander from your commandments.

Again, the words are really appropriate. Most of us just do not turn our back on God and angrily go off in a huff. We do things gradually. We *wander* off. We have no intention of doing it, but that is what happens because we do not pull ourselves back and make ourselves do what needs to be done in seeking God.

Turn to Psalm 27. We do know that David wrote this Psalm.

Psalm 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LOORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LOORD all the days of my life, and behold the beauty of the LOORD, and to enquire in his temple.

You can see an expanse here that God puts out for us. He wants us to put Him first. He wants us to seek Him diligently. He wants us to do it all the days of our life. It is intended by God, that when He draws us to Him, that He is setting us into a place that we will continually seek after Him. That is what Abel, Enoch, and Noah did. That is why they became what they became and used as examples to you and me.

Jesus had some things to say about this.

Luke 11:8-13 I say unto you, though he will not rise and give to him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity [his persistence, his perseverance], he will rise and give him as many as he needs. And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that

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seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

I am leading to something here, and we will end with what I am leading to.

In Jeremiah 29:12-13 is a promise that God makes to all of those who seek Him. He says, "You shall find Me." He is not hiding from His children, but He wants to see if we really have the desire to understand what He is like.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.

II Chronicles 15:15 And all Judah rejoiced at the truth: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, **and he was found of them:** and the LOORD gave them rest round about.

Now here is what I was leading to, and will give you this for you to think about.

Whenever we do this, what does God give us? Actually, the answer is very simple. We are going to look at Genesis 15:1. The context here is kind of interesting because in chapter 14 Abraham turned down a reward from the king for his rescue of their wealth. God was watching. There is no doubt about it. Then chapter 15 begins. Incidentally, if you want to go right through chapter 15 you will find that it was the very next day. God did not wait. It was the very next day. In fact, the way the Bible shows about time, it may have been the same day, but the daylight portion of the day, because what took place at the end of chapter 14 very likely took place at dark.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LOORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and [I am] your exceeding great reward.

I am going to leave it there because I want you to think about it. Do you see what His

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reward is? It is God Himself that He gives to His children who seek after Him, and God is the source of everything that we need for life—physically and spiritually. He is promising Abraham, ***"I will be with you forever. I AM YOUR REWARD!"*** That is what He wants to give to His children, and when we seek Him diligently and early, and make it our first priority continuously through life, He stands behind His promise, and He gives Himself, and of course with Him come all the goodies.

We will stop right there, and God willing we will pick this up in Hebrews 11 and carry it further the next time.