

Need & Fruit of Faith
Hebrews 11:4-7

January 4, 2015

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^B James 2:19

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^D Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13

^E Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 3:9; Matthew 23:35

^A Psalm 1:1-3; Romans 8:28

A. Introduction

1. Happy New Year!

- a. thus we wish each other as this new year dawns
- b. but, do we as Christians have any right to expect happiness as long as we live in this world that is so troubled by sin?
- c. with what expectations should we enter this year?
- d. if by happiness, we mean 'good things happening to us' out of pure chance – then we have no basis for happy expectations
- e. but there is a Scriptural word that is much akin to 'happy' – in fact we can often use 'happy' or 'Oh the happiness of' in its place to translate the original Hebrew or Greek ... blessed
- f. "1 Blessed is (oh! the happiness of) the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalms 1:1-3 AV)
- g. the difference in the flavour of that word is that it tells us that this state is not due to mere chance but to the working of God
- h. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

2. Happy Walking This New Year!

- a. that first Psalm tells us that the happiness a person experiences is dependent upon the way they walk
- b. now this has nothing to do with whether we stagger or stride, mince or stomp, take short steps or long
- c. in the Bible the term 'walk' has a spiritual meaning: manner of living
- d. today we are going to look at the part that faith plays in our walk
 - (A) there are really only two points to be remembered
 - (B) one, faith is needed, an absolute requirement for a spiritual walk
 - (C) two, like the Psalm says, faith produces fruit in our walk

B. Three Ancient Men of Faith

1. Abel

- a. verse 4 – “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain ...”
- (A) like the other two examples we have today, the history is told in the book of Genesis 4:3-5 – “3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.”
 - (B) now men, and particularly the rabbis, making all sorts of assumptions outside the Biblical record – such as Genesis is speaking of a sin-offering, whereas the Hebrew describes rather an offering such as first-fruits – have speculated on all manner of reasons why it was that Abel’s was a better sacrifice
 - (C) but we do not need to guess why; the writer of Hebrews tells us specifically what was the reason
- b. Abel made his offering by faith; faith made the difference
- (A) let us pause for a moment to talk about the nature of faith
 - (B) faith involves an intellectual assent to the truth
 - (C) this recognition of the truth is so great as to cause obedience
 - (D) but it also involves a trust relationship with the one on whom that faith is grounded – in fact a mutual trust relationship
 - (1) for example, we trust in Christ
 - (2) but God entrusts to us the gospel of the Christ
 - (E) we shall return to what faith is when we come to verse 6
- c. Both Cain and Abel
- (A) knew about God; who He is
 - (B) knew that an offering was due to be given to God
 - (C) obeyed, at least in form, of making that offering
- d. But God did not accept Cain’s offering
- (A) because unlike Abel’s, it was made in un-faith
 - (B) God explained this to Cain: “6 Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.’” (Genesis 4:6-7)
 - (C) Cain must master sin to do well; that required faith
 - (D) for Romans 14:23 states, ‘whatever is not from faith is sin.’
- e. the difference between these brothers was in faith

2. Enoch

- a. verse 5 – “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; And he was not found because God took him up; ...”
- (A) the writer of Hebrews, as usual, quotes the Greek translation of the OT, which differs in words though not in meaning from our English translation of Genesis, “21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. 22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” (Genesis 5:21-24)
 - (B) the evidence of Enoch’s faith was his translation: like Elijah later, he was taken from this world into the eternal realms without the necessity of death – ‘he was not, for God took him’
- b. Enoch had faith
- (A) certainly he know God in an intellectual sense
 - (B) but it was his trust relationship with God that is emphasised
 - (C) twice we are told that ‘Enoch walked with God’
 - (D) after Methuselah’s birth it is said this was a lifetime fellowship
 - (1) perhaps it only continued what had been the case before
 - (2) perhaps the miracle of that birth brought that life-change
 - (3) in any event, this was a fellowship so pleasing to God, He took Enoch directly to glory; Selah!

3. Noah

- a. verse 7 – “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark ...”
- (A) this history is told thus: “5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:5-8) ... “13 Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. 14 Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. ...” (Genesis 6:13-14) and gives Noah more instructions
 - (B) the phrase, ‘being warned’ involves not only the notification of a risk, but also the instruction to avoid that risk

- (1) it implies or states that this is a divine revelation
- (2) it is the same word about the magi not going back to Herod
- (3) and about Joseph returning from Egypt to Galilee, not Judea
- (C) like Enoch, 'Noah walked with God' (Genesis 6:9)
 - (1) it was on the basis of this trust relationship, this fellowship
 - (2) that He was in a position to receive God's revelation
- b. Noah's response to the warning and instructions
 - (A) was, first of all, a holy fear or reverence
 - (B) but more than that, for the word implies a caution or carefulness so as Moses was careful to follow the pattern shown to him in the mount in the construction of tabernacle, so was Noah, in his construction of the ark followed the plans God gave to him
 - (C) so that in Noah's faith we see a fellowship and intellectual belief both coupled with an obedience
- c. let us now consider ...

C. The Absolute Need for Faith

- 1. verse 6 – "And 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 seek Him."
 - a. the proof of Enoch's faith is not directly provided by the OT record
 - (A) but by the application of a universal truth
 - (B) indeed the use of these three men – all being prior to Abraham – takes this matter of faith outside of the commonwealth of Israel into the realm of all mankind – universally applicable
 - b. the proof is that Enoch pleased God – so he must have had faith
- 2. Of God's Being
 - a. faith is not merely the repetition of a set of creeds
 - (A) nor one among a number of alternate religions
 - (B) nor is it simply the belief that there is a god
 - b. but it is specifically that the God who is described in the Scriptures
 - (A) the One who is revealed through the prophets over many years
 - (B) the One who in these last days has been revealed in His Son
 - (C) is the one, true, living, eternal God – and He rules the universe
 - (D) "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen."

(1 Timothy 1:17)

- c. that is the first aspect of true faith; but it alone is not enough: "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." (James 2:19); it also a realisation ...

3. Of God's Character

- a. the second aspect of faith is personal: that as well as being the high and holy God who orders all things according to His sovereign will
- b. He is the personal God who cares for His creation, especially for man
- c. the Bible throughout leaves no doubt but that God created mankind that he should have a relationship of faith with Himself,
 - (A) throughout the Jewish economy this was shown by the picture of God as the husband of His people Israel
 - (B) throughout the Christian economy, of the church as Christ's bride
 - (C) the most intimate of all human relationships is used as the basis of illustrating the relationship God desires with His people
- d. and faith is that which builds a person's life firmly and squarely by trusting in the promises God has made to us in His word

4. An Assuring Faith

- a. such a faith enables us, who are sinful creatures, to have an eternal relationship with the perfect Creator
- b. God is there to be found by anyone who truly seeks Him
- c. that's a promise God gave to Israel if they repented: "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul." (Deuteronomy 4:29), and, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13); which brings us to ...

D. The Fruit of Faith

1. Lasting Testimony

- a. verse 4 continues "By faith ... he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks."
 - (A) faith brings the lasting testimony of God on the believers' behalf
 - (B) the faith of each of the heroes in this chapter is still spoken of
 - (C) the faith of individuals such as George Muller who ran the Bristol orphanage is still renowned
 - (D) so also that of the Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, and their fellow martyrs in Ecuador

- b. you see, that because faith is not just intellectual belief, but a living trust in an eternal God by a man with an everlasting soul
 - (A) death does not terminate its effect
 - (B) nor destroy our relationship with God, the object of our trust

2. Pleasing God

- a. we have already seen in looking at verse 6 that faith – as there used and defined – is the universally necessary condition for pleasing God
- b. and verse 5 continues “By faith Enoch... for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”
 - (A) the translation of Enoch was certainly a confirmation
 - (B) but it was not itself the witness that He was pleasing (an ongoing fact, not a one time act) to God
 - (C) it was that life of faith – the ongoing walk with God, in close relationship and harmony with the will of God – that bore this testimony; the translation was simply the exclamation point
- c. I cannot begin to understand how mere mortals can please eternal God – there is such a gulf between God and man – and yet, through the vehicle of faith that becomes possible
- d. and not only possible, but part of God’s will, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

3. Righteousness

- a. verse 7 says, “By faith Noah ... became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)
 - (A) Noah is an illustration of Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;” (Ephesians 2:8)
 - (1) we read, ‘Noah found favour (or, grace) in the eyes of the Lord’
 - (2) faith exercised in the obedience in building the ark, brought salvation to him and his family
 - (B) but more than that, it brought the righteousness described by Paul in Philippians 3:9, “... not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ...”
- b. nor was Noah alone in such righteousness, but also Abel
 - (A) as verse 4 says, “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, ...”
 - (B) and Jesus Himself testifies of this in Matthew 23:35, “so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous

blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

E. Conclusion

1. Faith – the acknowledgment of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, along with the fellowship in a trust relationship with Him; this is what is needed
2. To Walk – through this year with God, and to know the happiness that Psalm 1 describes of the blessed man. Give up trying it all on your own.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

A&G	– Arndt & Gingrich translation of fourth edition of William Bauer’s Lexicon; 1955 (aka BAG).
Barnes	– <i>Notes on the New Testament, et alia</i> , by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh
BM	– <i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC	– <i>The Expositor’s Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan <i>Hebrews</i> , by Leon Morris
EGT	– <i>The Expositor’s Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton <i>Hebrews</i> , by Marcus Dods
Gill	– <i>Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament</i> , by John Gill, D.D.
Kerux	– The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com .
NICNT	– <i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Epistle to the Hebrew</i> , by F. F. Bruce
RWP	– <i>Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson
TYN	– <i>The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i> <i>Hebrews</i> , by Donald Guthrie