

Hebrews 11:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

This verse establishes the absolute necessity of faith for pleasing God and the essential content of saving faith. The emphatic construction 'chōris de pisteōs' (χωρὶς δὲ πίστεως, 'without faith') followed by 'adunaton' (ἀδύνατον, 'impossible') creates the strongest possible negation—not merely difficult but categorically impossible to please God apart from faith. The verb 'euarestēsai' (εὐαρεστήσαι, 'to please') means to be fully acceptable or well-pleasing, indicating that works performed without faith, however outwardly impressive, fail to satisfy God's righteous requirements. Two foundational faith components are specified: first, 'that he is' (ὅτι ἔστιν, *hoti estin*) requires belief in God's existence and reality—not mere intellectual acknowledgment but convinced trust in His personal being. Second, 'that he is a rewarder' (μισθαποδότης γίνεται, *misthapodotēs ginetai*) means God actively recompenses those who diligently seek Him. The verb 'ekzētousin' (ἐκζητοῦσιν, 'diligently seek') denotes earnest, persistent pursuit rather than casual inquiry. This seeking presupposes confidence that God can be found and will respond to genuine spiritual hunger. The reward is not earned through works but graciously given to those whose faith drives them to pursue intimate knowledge of God Himself.

Historical Context

Writing to Hebrew Christians familiar with the old covenant, the author establishes that the principle of *sola fide* (faith alone) is not a New Testament

innovation but the consistent requirement throughout redemptive history. The examples that follow in Hebrews 11—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham—demonstrate that every justified person from history was saved by faith, not works. This directly addresses Jewish Christians tempted to return to dependence on Levitical sacrifices, ceremonial law observance, and ethnic identity as the basis for God's acceptance. The author demolishes any confidence in religious performance divorced from heart faith. In the Greco-Roman context, many religions emphasized correct ritual performance and divine appeasement through sacrifice, with little emphasis on personal relationship or inward transformation. Hebrews presents biblical faith as radically different—it requires genuine conviction about God's character and personal trust in His promises. The statement 'without faith it is impossible to please God' would have resonated powerfully in context of Hebrews 10:38, quoting Habakkuk 2:4: 'the just shall live by faith.' For readers facing persecution, this verse provided both warning and encouragement—works-based religion offers false security, but genuine faith in God's character guarantees His reward, even if that reward is delayed until eternity.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why is it impossible to please God without faith, even if our actions appear morally good?
2. What is the difference between believing that God exists and truly trusting in His character and promises?
3. How does understanding God as 'a rewarder' affect our motivation for seeking Him diligently?

4. In what ways might religious activity become a substitute for genuine faith in God's person?
5. What does 'diligently seeking' God look like practically in daily life, and how does it differ from casual spirituality?

Interlinear Text

χωρίς	δὲ	πίστεως	ἀδύνατον	εὐαρεστῆσαι·	πιστεῦσαι				
without	But	faith	it is impossible	to please	believe				
G5565	G1161	G4102	G102	G2100	G4100				
γὰρ	δεῖ	τὸν	προσερχόμενον	τῷ	θεῷ	ὅτι	ἔστιν	καὶ	
him for	must		he that cometh		to God	that	he is	and	
G1063	G1163	G3588	G4334	G3588	G2316	G3754	G2076	G2532	
τοῖς	ἐκζητοῦσιν	αὐτὸν	μισθαποδότης	γίνεται					
	of them that diligently seek	him	a rewarder	that he is					
G3588	G1567	G846	G3406	G1096					

Additional Cross-References

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

Matthew 6:33 (References God): But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (References God): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Luke 12:31 (References God): But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Psalms 119:10 (Parallel theme): With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Hebrews 7:25 (References God): Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 3:12 (References God): Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Romans 10:14 (Faith): How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Psalms 73:28 (Faith): But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

John 14:6 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.