

Impossible to Please

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[0 : 0 0] In Hebrews chapter 11, we read this familiar verse 6. But without faith, it is impossible to please him, that is God.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Without faith, it is impossible to please him.

This would imply then that it is not merely a matter of intellectual assent. In terms of, well, yeah, I believe there's a God. I believe there is something somewhere out there.

I'm even prepared to go through the motions of outward religion. Just as, you know, plenty of people did in the Old Testament days. And plenty of people still do, perhaps, under the gospel disposition.

There is a widespread, what we might call, folk religion. Which is to the effect that as long as I'm a nice person, I pay my taxes, I'm not a criminal. I don't do this, I don't do that, I don't do the next thing.

[0 : 5 9] I even go to church. Then, you know, at the end of the day, God should be reasonably pleased with me. Because I'm not a bad person. I haven't done anything especially bad. So, I've gone through the motions.

I've picked the boxes. I've played by the rules. I've done what he wanted. So, you know, he's going to do what I want. Our relationship with the Lord is not a bargain. It is not a contract in the sense that we have got a key that we can put in and turn the lock.

And that we can somehow compel God, if we do X, that we can compel God to do Y. Everything that the Lord does in terms of his relationship to us is by way of grace.

It is a free, gracious gift to us. And if we are to receive that gift, then we are called upon, we are required to have faith.

Faith. And faith, Jesus tells us, can move mountains. Faith enabled Peter to walk upon the water until he looked around and he saw the wind boisterous.

[2 : 0 4] And he began to be afraid and then he began to sink. And Jesus said, O thou of little faith, wherefore is that that? Now, it wasn't that Peter had no faith. It's just that, well, he let go of his faith.

But faith is that by which we are taught. We are enabled to please God. How can we do that? Just by believing? Is that what pleases God?

If I say, well, Lord, I believe in you. Does that mean that God is now pleased with me? No, it's not simply, well, I believe you exist, Lord. God has provided one means.

And one means only. Which will cause him to be favorable to us. And that means is his son, Jesus Christ.

And if we are enabled by grace to put our faith in him, that is to trust in him completely, then all other outward forms of religion, it's not that they're irrelevant, but they take their appropriate place.

[3 : 0 6] You know, if we think of Psalm 51, you know, David's great cry of confession. He says, for thou desirest not sacrifice, verse 16 of Psalm 51, else would I give it.

If that was what I had to do, Lord, I would do it. Whatever you said to me to do, I would give it. I would do it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. Now, we can't say that God is displeased with burnt offering, per se, in the Old Testament, because he is the one who has authorized it.

He is the one who specified it. In Exodus and Deuteronomy and so on, he has required it. So we can't say it displeases him. But rather, it is not a mechanical means of securing God's favor.

Thou delightest not in burnt offering. And that says, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise one which is conscious of its sin, one which is prepared to acknowledge its need.

A broken, a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise. And then he goes on, notice. Do good in thy good pleasure and design. Build all the walls of Jerusalem. And we take that in spiritual terms. [4 : 16] Build up thy church. Build up the people of God. Then, when God is pleased with the people of God because of their faith, their contrite heart, their broken spirit, when they are coming to him in humble faith, then there is the right place for all the outward forms that he has authorized.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering. Then shalt thou offer bullocks upon thy altar in its rightful place, in its rightful setting, which is a setting of faith.

Without faith, it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is. Well, most people, even probably most diehard atheists, probably secretly believe there's something, someone out there.

That's not enough. That's not what we're talking about. That he is an awarder of them that diligently seek him. Now, we saw in verse 1, this famous verse, Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and all the characters that it lists throughout this 11th chapter in Hebrews.

And it names 15 individuals. And what you will find with each of these individuals is that they were called upon by faith to undertake something for which they had as yet no physical evidence before them.

[5 : 45] Noah, going by the Bible's arithmetic, was 100 years building the ark before the flood came. He is putting his trust in a promise and a warning and a word of God, which for 100 years he sees no evidence of fulfillment.

And yet he acts in faith upon what he doesn't yet see. When it comes to pass, he and his family are the only ones that are saved because he acted in faith.

Enoch walked with God. Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Right at the beginning there, in the first generation from Adam and Eve, when God has withdrawn himself, having previously walked with, when Adam and Eve walked in the garden in the cool of the day and so on, but now he has withdrawn himself.

Man cannot be in the kind of communion with God that he once was. So Abel is, by faith, offering this sacrifice to the living God, Jehovah.

And, you know, sometimes you say, well, why was his sacrifice accepted? And Cain's wasn't. Maybe it's because he offered blood because it was a lamb. Okay, there may be an element of that.

[7 : 00] But even if we take that into consideration, that would mean it was unfair. That would mean it was unjust because Cain was a pillar of the ground. He brought his sheeps of wheat and he brought his offerings of the corn and the wheat and the harvest.

He can't offer blood. He's not a shepherd. He hasn't got blood to offer. That wouldn't be fair if that was the sole reason. But rather we are told here that by faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

And we can see, if we read the narrative in Genesis of God's dealings with Cain, how there is resentment, there is rebellion, but there's not really faith. Not faith that, as Galatians put it, worketh by love.

Because, as you know, Corinthians tells us, faith, hope, love, charity, they're all intermingled with each other. You can't separate out the strands of them.

You can distinguish between them, but you can't separate between them. Because love that is of God will be a love that is bound up with faith. And faith, being the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, is bound up with hope.

[8 : 05] As Romans tells us, hope that is seen is not hope. If we've already got it in front of us, we're not hoping for it. So all these things and all these people, Abraham going into a country, going out from his own country into a country he's never been in before.

He doesn't know anything about it, but he trusts and believes that the country to which God will bring him is a country that will be given to his descendants. He doesn't live to see it, but he goes in faith.

He trusts in what he doesn't yet see. Sarah is given strength to conceive. Sarah laughed, we're told, when she was promised that she would conceive. And have a son.

And yet she is given the strength in the end to do so. Isaac, likewise, is the one who is delivered from sacrifice when he would have been offered up.

But in Isaac shall they see be called. And likewise, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Things he did not live to see. But things that he believed and trusted in.

[9 : 08] The God who was the God of his fathers. So likewise, all the way through, these heroes of the faith. They are those who are distinguished by acting upon what they believe, which they have not yet seen come to pass.

The substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen. Now we might be inclined to think, well that's fine. But it was an awful lot easier for people in Jesus' day, wasn't it?

Because they had Jesus physically there. So that made it easier. And of course, we don't have that now. For a little while, yes. For a little while, when Jesus was revealed to the world for that, what, three, three and a half years in his public ministry.

It didn't mean that everybody fell at his feet and believed in him just because he was there in the flesh. You know, we might think, oh well if Jesus was actually here, then it would be easier to believe. It doesn't mean that we would have faith.

You know, if we were able to sort of bind Jesus and hold him and compel him to be right where we are. Then we might think, yeah, and I can get him to do this and that and the next thing. No, you can't. Not without faith.

[10 : 12] Faith, which of necessity will humble ourselves, will exalt Christ, will recognize that our relationship to him is of the suppliant at the feet of the great king, which will empty ourselves of our pride.

And then take the example of Herod here. In Luke chapter 23, Pilate sends Jesus bound to Herod when he knows that he's in his jurisdiction. And we read Luke 23, verse 8, When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see him of a long time, because he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

Then he questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him, and Herod, with his men of war, set him at naught and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again through Pilate.

There is Jesus, physically present in the room with Herod. He's got him right there. But he's not going to do anything. He's not going to sort of wow Herod with a miracle here there.

He's not doing tricks to impress Herod, because Herod has no faith. Herod is not interested in Jesus and what he represents. He just wants to be entertained. And Jesus is not having any of it.

[11 : 25] But supposing, let's just imagine the scenario. Supposing when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, that Herod had said, oh, thank goodness, Lord, that you are here.

I know I haven't always been a follower of yours, but listen, I've heard that you could do amazing things. There's this favorite courtier of mine, and he's ill. He's ill and he's dying.

Please, will you heal him? Send out away all these chief priests, get rid of him, cut his bonds, wash his wounds, give him something to eat and drink if he needs it. And then, Lord, please help my servant.

I believe and I trust that you can do it. Would Jesus have said to Herod, no, I'm not doing a thing for you. I know what you're like. You killed John the Baptist. You're a licentious, you're a worldly. I'm not going to help you. Jesus would not have done that.

We have no record of Jesus ever turning anyone away who trusted and came to him by faith.

Herod, for all his unbelieving pride and worldliness, had he approached Jesus with the humility and trust of faith?

[12 : 31] Had he shown evidence of believing in him, of humbling himself and emptying himself with his own pride and arrogance and looking to Jesus? Would Jesus have helped him?

Would Jesus have healed a servant who was sick? Would he have helped him with a particular problem? I believe he would have done. Because Jesus doesn't turn anyone away. Whatever their situations, a curse, a tax collector, a Roman centurion, an instrument of oppression of the Jewish people, Jesus is prepared to do as they ask when they ask by faith and when they believe.

We need to empty ourselves of our own strength, our own trust in ourselves. You see, Jesus is not physically here with us now, but he's present by his spirit.

We are called still to trust in one whom we have not seen. Jesus said to Thomas, Thomas, blessed are you trusting because you've seen. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet will believe.

And that would be everybody after the apostolic age. Everybody for 2,000 years hasn't set eyes on Jesus physically because the power of Jesus to transform lives is not bound up with his physical

presence.

[13 : 47] Otherwise, Herod's court would have been converted on the spot. Otherwise, Pilate would have been transformed. The Sanhedrin would have said, this is the Messiah, just because he physically stood in the midst.

But it is not bound up with his physical bodily appearance. It is faith in who he is and what he has done. That he is the living God personified in the flesh.

Do we believe this? We are taught here in this passage through faith. We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

He spoke and it was so. He uttered his voice and the world and the universe and all the planets came into being. So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

God didn't take a lump of this and fashion it into something else. Well, except for the creation of man, of course. But in terms of the universe and all that he did, he spoke. And it was so he spoke out of nothing.

[14 : 46] And he brought the universe into being by the word of his mouth. The living word of God. God. Now, such is the power and the strength of God.

We just don't get our heads around it. We can't get our heads around it. Because he is so vast. He fills the heavens and the earth. It is more than most people can get their heads around.

You know, he is so powerful that we just can't imagine it. When you think of the vastness of the universe, I know we can't imagine it. But think of our own solar system.

I know I have used the illustration before. So apologies for repeating it. But I think it is a helpful one. Thinking in terms of our own earth. Thinking in terms of the sun. Thinking in terms of even one of the vast number of stars out there.

And one of those that is named. In Job, for example. In chapter 9. If we think in terms of his descriptions of the greatness of God. Let's just read a wee passage briefly in Job 9.

[15 : 49] Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth. But how should a man be just with God? Well, we know that in Hebrews. Without faith. It is impossible to please him and so on.

If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who hath pardoned himself against him and hath prospered? He had pardoned himself against Jesus.

What good did it do to him? We read of how he died and perished and was eaten of worms. Who hath pardoned himself against him and hath prospered? Which removeeth the mountains and they know not.

Which overturneth them in his anger. Which shaketh the earth out of our place. And the pillars thereof tremble. Which commandeth the sun and it riseth not. And sealet up the stars.

Which alone spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number.

[16 : 48] Job makes mention of the star Arcturus there. Which we see as a little twinkly star in the blackness of the night sky. Now, the illustration I've used in the past. You imagine yourself eating your mints and tatties.

There you are, sitting at a kitchen table, eating your mints and tatties. And you've got your mints and tatties and your peas. And you put a wee bit of salt on it. Put down the salt shaker there. And your child or your grandchild is outside bouncing a basketball.

And putting it through the hoop and so on. While you're eating away. And they come in and they plunk a basketball down on the kitchen table. And they plunk it down with such force one of your little peas. Rolls off the plate and stops beside you.

And it makes the salt shaker jump. And a little grain of salt comes down and lands beside the green pea. Now, in terms of comparison, the single one solitary grain of salt would correspond to the size of our earth.

The green pea would correspond to the size of our sun. The sun which lights up our entire world and all our solar system.

[17 : 53] And the sun whose energy we might harness a little bit with our solar panels. And it runs generators. And it is itself a continuously burning up mass of light and power and heat so intense.

We can't even look at it. That's the sun. The tiny little green pea. And beside the sun is the basketball. And the basketball represents Arcturus.

Arcturus, that star which is so massive in comparison to our little sun. It's like the basketball beside the green pea. And think of Arcturus as just like the sun, only umpteen thousands of millions of sizes bigger.

And it too is a mass of burning bright heat. Greater than we could ever look upon with an energy we cannot even begin to imagine.

The heat of the sun, the power, the energy in the sun that could drive anything in this world. Which if we were edged even just a little bit closer to it than our orbit permits in the earth would burn us all up.

[19 : 01] That level of energy, that level of power, whoever made it, must be infinitely greater than that little green pea of a sun. Let alone the basketball of Arcturus.

Let alone Orion and Pleiades and all the constellations and all the galaxies and all the vastness of the universe. That he has made and stretched out. He commanded the sun that riseth not.

He seaeth up the stars which alone spreadeth out the heavens. Treadeth upon the waves of the sea. This is a glimpse of the sheer power and strength and creative ability of the God whom we worship and serve.

What idiots would shake their fists at heaven and say, I am stronger than God. I do not stand in need of this God. As if we did not stand in need of our own sun in the sky.

And the light and the heat and the life that it gives which he made. Let alone Arcturus, Pleiades, Orion and all the constellations that are out there. Which we can see in the sky.

[20 : 09] If we observe and if we know. But God has set them so far away from us. That they can do us no harm. But only benefit us by being twinkling lights and constellations.

By which mariners can navigate and people can study for their own edification. And learning a little bit more about the wonder of the creator. Jeremiah says this in chapter 43.

Verse, Am I a God at hand, said the Lord, and not a God afar off? By dealing with Israel or with our own nation or with other people here in this earth. And this confines this.

Am I not a God out there in the universe? Am I not feeling the vastness of the heavens? He talks about the false prophets and he said, If they had stood in my counsel. And had caused my people to hear my words.

Then they should have turned them from their evil way. And from the evil of their doings. Am I a God at hand, said the Lord, and not a God afar off? Such is his power to transform through the words of prophets if they were true.

[21 : 13] Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Said the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Said the Lord. I have heard what the prophets said.

That prophesying lies in my name. Saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. Which think to cause my people to forget my name. By their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor. As their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream.

And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? Said the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire?

Said the Lord. And like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces. The power of the word of the Lord. Do we believe this?

[22 : 12] Do we trust in this God? Do we have faith in the God who reveals himself thus? For without faith it is impossible to please him.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is. And that he is an award of them that diligently seek him. All our earthbound religious efforts will come to nothing.

If we seek to leave out this critical element of faith in the Messiah that the Lord has sent. Micah has this likewise in chapter 16 of wherewith. Shall I come before the Lord?

And bow myself before the high God. Shall I come before him with burnt offerings. With calves of a year old. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams. Or ten thousands of rivers of oil.

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression. The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul. He hath shown thee, O man, who is good. And what that the Lord required of thee but to do justly.

[23 : 11] And to love mercy. And to walk humbly with thy God. To do justly. Is to recognize the justice of God. The paying of the price of sin.

By the one and only means that he has given. His son Jesus Christ. To love mercy. Is to recognize the gift the Lord has given to undeserving sinners.

As we are. To love that which he has done for us. And because of that love for his mercy. To walk humbly before him. How can we do anything other.

All the burnt offerings and rivers of oil in the world. Will count for nothing. Compared to what he himself has done for us. If we have faith in him.

All things are possible. If we trust and believe in him. This is what Jesus says. Remember at the fruit of the mount of transfiguration. The father of the boy who was lunatic.

[24 : 11] And he pled with Jesus to heal him. And he says. If thou canst do anything. Have compassion on us. Mark 9 at verse 22. Jesus said unto him. If thou canst believe.

All things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child. Cried out and said with tears. Lord I believe. Help thou.

Help my unbelief. Now is this not the situation. Of all of us to an extent. Even if we now may be people of strong faith.

We know there was a time when we weren't. You know when John writes his letter. He writes to those who are little children. He writes to those who are the young. And the strong and vigorous in the faith.

He writes to those who are the old men. By extension old women as well. Those who are mature and wise in the faith. But we didn't start off. At any of these levels.

[25 : 07] If we begin. We begin as little children. We grow. Lord willing. Just as the bud and the blossom grows into the fruit. And the fruit to begin with is hard.

And green. And gnarly. And then it gradually ripens. And softens. And its color changes. And it becomes ready. For the harvest. So likewise we ourselves.

Are not to have a static dead faith. That is set in stone. But rather a living. Organic. Living. Breathing faith. Which is to grow and blossom and bud.

And ripen for glory. If we are to have faith. Then it can only be faith. In God's beloved son Jesus Christ.

He is not pleased. By any other sacrifice or means. If it leaves Christ out. Without faith. It is impossible. To please him.

[26 : 07] Now. In terms of pleasing God. This is what the word propitiation means. That which causes. To be favorable. A propitiation is that.

Which causes God to be pleased. To be favorable. Toward us. You know what 1st John. Records in chapter 2. Verses 1 and 2 here.

My little children. These things write unto you. That ye sin not. And if any man sin. We have an advocate with the father. Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation. For our sins.

The one who causes God. To be favorable for us. And not for ours only. But also for the sins of the whole world. Nobody is shut out from us. Whatever false religions. They may have followed before. If they will trust now. In God's son Jesus Christ. Then he will be favorable towards them. But it is impossible. For God to be pleased with them.

[27 : 03] Or their sacrifices. Or their so-called prayers. Or their religion. Without Christ. Because without faith in Christ. It is impossible to please him.

There is only one means of pleasing God. He has given his one and only son. He has given that which is most precious to him.

To those who are at enmity with him. And if they would impress him. If they would please him. If they would cause him to become favorable to him. There is only one thing. That he will ultimately be impressed with.

And that is their attitude to his beloved son. It is though the Lord is saying. This is what impresses me. This is the expression of my love. This sacrifice of my beloved son upon the cross.

Whatever else you may have been guilty of. Whatever else you may have done well. I want to know where you stand in respect of this. Calvary sacrifice.

[28 : 04] This is my beloved son. Hear ye him. Or I will hear nothing of you. Without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is.

And he is an awarder of them that diligently seek him. If we are to diligently seek him. It means that we will seek until we find. Jesus said if we seek we shall find.

If we knock it shall be opened. If we ask it shall be given. But if you think of the beloved in the song of Solomon. To begin with she opens and he is gone.

He is gone. She doesn't say oh well he is gone. Never mind I am going back to bed. I have washed my feet. How will I defile them? I put off my coat. How will I put it on again? No. My soul failed when he's thick.

I sought him but I could not find him. I called him but he gave me no answer. The watchman that went about the city found me. They smoked me. They wounded me. The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

[29 : 07] I charge you oh daughters of Jerusalem. If ye find my beloved. That ye tell him that I am sick of love. I am wasting away from love for him.

She goes seeking. She takes the buffeting. She takes the injuries. It doesn't matter as long as she finds him whom her soul loveth.

She knocks. She asks. She seeks. She seeks. She seeks. She finds. She finds. She makes himself known to her in the fullness of time.

Ask and it shall be given. Seek and ye shall find. He is an award of them that diligently seek him.

And we might be inclined to think well yeah okay.

I can believe up to a point yeah. I know that I can. I know that I can. I can believe that Jesus exists. I know that yes he is perhaps a saviour.

[30 : 02] But you know the world is very much present. And I have to live in the world. But surely it says well love not the world. Now John says. First John. The same chapter we read earlier.

It says love not the world. Neither are the things that are in the world. If any man love the world. The love of the father is not in him. But all that is in the world. The lust of the flesh. The lust of the eyes. The pride of life.

Is not of the father. But is of the world. And the world passes away. And the lust it all. If he that doeth the will of God. Abide forever. Am I meant to reject the world?

Am I meant to hate the world? If I'm not to love it. The Lord has given so many good things in this world. Surely I've got to love them too. I've got to appreciate them too. Well we've got to understand the sense. In which love is meant here.

If we turn a page. We find in chapter 4. Verses 7 and 8. It says. Beloved let us love one another.

For love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God.

[30 : 58] And knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God. For God is love. And this. I am ashamed to say. It is used so often. Nowadays. By those who would claim.

That if we are indulging. In all manner of lasciviousness. That this is love. This is. Oh yeah. And I'm engaging with this. With my own sexuality.

Or with my own sort of indulgence. And this is who I am. And God loves me. And I love. And the person I love. And the people I love. And the people I do these things with. Because I'm a loving person.

And I'm loving them in this way. Well God loves me. Because God is love. And that's what it says. You know. Everyone that loveth. Is born of God. And knoweth God. Well I'm okay. Because that's what I do. We have to understand.

The way in which the word love is used. As we mentioned sometimes in the past. The Greek. In which the New Testament. Is written. There's three different terms. For love. We've only got the one word.

[31 : 56] Love. But they have three different terms. Eos. From which we get the word erotic. Which means sexual love. Physical love. Of that kind of.

Sometimes. Like a serious nature. Sometimes. Sanctified love. Of that physical kind. Phileo. Which is friendship love. Kind of brotherly love. In that sense.

And then the third term is agape. Agape. Which means. Self. Empty. In love. The complete giving. Of the self. In the self.

Sacrificing. Of the self. To the thing that is loved. Or to the person. That is loved. Now it's in this sense. When it says. God is love. And he that loveth.

Is born of God. And knoweth God. It means the one who. Empties the self. Not the one who indulges the self. And says. Oh yeah. I love this. I love that. I love that little doggy.

[32 : 51] In the window. Everybody loves something. Somebody loves. Some people love their fast cars. Or they love the amount of money. They make at their job. Or they love football. Or they love

their dogs. Hitler loved his dogs.

He was a great animal lover. Brilliant. Does that mean he's in heaven? Because you know. He loved something. So you know. He that loveth is of God. God is love. So does that make that okay? You know.

We can multiply. We can multiply. Example. The people. Oh love something. So does that mean they don't care? No. This agape. This self-emptying. Sacrificial love. The servant love.

God is love. God is agape. God is this self-emptying God. Such is the love. You know. Like Philipians. Says. You know. He emptied himself.

He took the lowest form. He became a servant. He became faithful. Even unto death. Even the death of the cross. Being found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself.

[33 : 47] The senses. Humbled himself even further. And became obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross. Wherefore God highly exalted him now. Because he emptied himself out now.

If we are going to have faith in Christ. Then God requires of us. That emptying out of the self. That sacrificial love.

For him. Because that is what he calls upon us to do. Why? Because that is what he has done for us. And constantly the Lord is inviting his people. In the Old Testament and in the New.

To be like him. Be ye holy. For I the Lord your God am holy. He that loveth not. He that is not agape. Knoweth not God.

For God is love. God is agape. And later on we begin in the same. The same chapter. Here in his love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us.

[34 : 44] And sent his son to be the propitiation. For our sins. Beloved. If God so loved us. We are also to love one another. You see when people may think.

Well yeah. I can believe there is a God. I can believe even in Jesus Christ. I can believe he is the son of God. I believe he saved some people. I believe that some people genuinely are saved. I just can't believe it's for me. I just can't believe that he loves me.

In this way. And that is so often the sticking point. Isn't it? We can believe that God is real. We can believe that Christ is our saviour. We can believe that he has saved certain people.

We can even believe and recognise. In the transformation we may have seen. In the lives of others around us. We just can't bring ourselves to believe. That it is for me.

That it is for us. Why would he do this for me? What evidence do I have that he would do it for me? What evidence do I see that he even wants to save me at all?

[35 : 42] Well we could say on the one hand. What more does he have to do? He's given his only beloved son. He's given that which is most precious to him. He has emptied himself.

He has given that which is most dear to him. Here in his love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us.

And sent his son to be the propitiation. The thing that causes him to be favourable. For our sins. If God so loved us. Which he did. We are also to love one another.

His love for you is not in doubt. But it's only your response to him. Which is the very above. You see. We might say. What evidence do I have that it's for me?

I can see it's for other people. But what evidence do I have that it is for me? What is faith? Faith is the substance of things. Hope for the evidence of things. Not seen.

[36 : 40] For by it the elders obtained a good report. What did they do? All these people. Abel and Enoch and Sarah. And Abraham and Jacob. And Joseph and Jephthah. And David and Samuel. They all acted.

On that which they could not yet see. That is what they were called upon to do. That is what you and I are called upon to do. To put our faith into practice.

Because such is the love of God for us. He has done so much for us. That this faith that we might claim to have. Requires a response.

Like we are looking at with the children this morning. With the invitations. RSVP. Respond. Si vous plaît. Please reply. Please respond to God's invitation.

For without faith it is impossible to please her. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is. And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

[37 : 44] Seek what you cannot see. Love what you cannot yet see. Whom having not seen. Peter says. Yet ye love. Because he has shown such love for us.

He and his love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us. And has given his son to be a propitiation for our sins. Do I believe this is for me? Do I want it to be for me? If you desire it to be for you. You have to step out and think. You have to put that faith into practice. But that would mean. That would mean I have to let go of control of my life. That would mean I would have to give it over to God completely. Nothing might happen. He might not do anything with my life. He might leave me high and dry. Well if he does you know worse off than you are now. This so called control of your own life. This so called self direction. And self moving of your own life. And spirit and choices. You know in real times. How many of the choices you make in your life are actually open and free. [38 : 49] Most of them are constricted by circumstances aren't they? You didn't have a choice. Where you were born. Or who your parents were. Most of us don't live in houses of our own designing or choosing our building.

We get what we can get. We buy the one we can afford. Or we inherit it. Or you know. We do not have a choice about which country in the world the Lord plucks us down. What language we speak. What culture we inherit.

All these things. We can't love them of course. But we don't really have a choice in them. So many things act upon us. And we think well all the more reason why I should take charge of my own life. Where is that going to lead you? And where is that going to lead you? Loving the things of this world. That's what it means. Loving the world. You're emptying yourself for the benefit of the world. It's going to pass away. Loving the world. Other things in the world. Because everything that's in the world is going to pass away. You empty yourself for the benefit of this world. It's just poured down the drain. You empty yourself for the Lord.

[39 : 49] You empty out the pride. The self-indulgence. The self-belief. And self-strength. And you put God on the throne.

And you see what will happen. Oh what? Nothing might happen. He might not do it for me. He might not want me. If you are genuine. If you are sincere. If you are prepared to really let go.

And let the Lord take charge of your life. Like Abram set out not knowing where he was going. Like Abel offered up his sacrifice to a God he had never seen. Like Noah built his ark for a flood that he didn't see coming for a hundred years.

But he trusted and he believed. Are you prepared to trust and believe in a God you do not see? Are you prepared to put your faith in him?

Because you cannot please him otherwise. All your good works. All your good works. All your good works. All your good works. And the main deeply good works. All the faithful practice or diligence in religion or the New Testament equipment of all the old sacrifices of old.

[40 : 53] That won't please him. That won't impress him. The one thing impresses him. The death of his son Jesus Christ. This is such divine love in action.

He wants to know. What do you think about this? What think you of Christ? Where are you in relation to my son? This is what I'm interested in. This is what I want to know about. Did you put your faith in him?

Whatever else you did in your life. Where do you stand in respect of Christ? That's what they'll ask you at the last day. That's what he will want to know. And without faith, that is faith in Christ.

Without that self-emptying love which is bound up with faith. Faith, hope and love. Oh, well, I love this. I love that. I love the next thing. You read 1 Corinthians 13.

That's all about agape. Charity. Suffereth long in his kind. Charity. Vaunteth not itself. Is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly.

[41 : 51] Seeketh not her own. Is not easily provoked. Thinketh not evil. Beareth all things. Believeth all things. Hopeth all things. Endureth all things. Charity never faileth. Is that the kind of love you have? For the world?

Or for Christ? Is that the love you can say that is bound up with your faith? Faith. Because faith worketh by love. Without faith it is impossible to please them.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is. And that he is a warden of them that diligently seek him. We walk by faith. Not by sight. Sooner or later.

If you are to please God at all. If you are to be brought from death to life. If you are to be transformed by his infinite power that fills the heavens and the earth.

And all the Arcturus and Orion and Pleiades. And all the vast constellations of heaven. If that power is to be channeled into your life. And if it is to transform your heart, your spirit and soul.

[42 : 53] Which it can and which it will. If you put your trust in Christ. You must first let go of the old self. And the love that may have been expended on the world.

Must now be turned to him. You don't see him. You don't see God. And we walk by faith. Not by sight. And faith is the substance of things hoped for.

The evidence of things not seen. Let us pray.