

# Those Who Persevere: Approved of God

To be approved by God means that God, Himself, testifies that you are His and you are forgiven of all your unrighteousness.

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## Why This Text?

1. My translation today is the Christian Standard Bible - which uses this word “approved” and I will tell you why I believe it to be the best in just a short while.
2. We have focused on three themes of those who persevered:
  - a. They had faith: we defined faith as that which allows the unseen to be seen
  - b. They believed what is to come exceeds what is now
  - c. They were approved of God

## What Does This Text Teach?

### Why Translate It As Received God’s Approval?

1. As mentioned, this word I am translating as approved is the root word μαρτυρέω (we typically translate “to testify or bear witness”).
2. I must get a little bit technical with you here: because the text is critical.
  - a. There is no textual difference/variant here: the Majority Text, Critical Text, and even the TR all have the same word.
  - b. This word means “to speak well of a person on the basis of personal experience.”

3. This word is a verb: an aorist, passive, indicative; therefore, this is a one-time event, those spoken of received it (the action was done on them, passive), and it is a statement of fact.
4. The Bible Sense Lexicon describes this word: to be approvingly testified of; to be or become affirmed favorably by firsthand authentication.

ἐμαρτυρήθησαν - aorist, passive, indicative = received God's approval

## What Does It Mean To Receive God's Approval?

1. Those who received God's approval received it by faith
  - a. As mentioned earlier Hebrews 11:2 tells us that by faith is how the Old Covenant saints were approved
  - b. Then in Hebrews 11:4 it tells us that God approved Abel and his sacrifice, which were offered by faith
  - c. Finally, unnamed parties in Hebrews 11:32-40 are all said to be approved by God in Hebrews 11:39
2. Those who received God's approval bore the fruits of obedience (Heb. 11:4, Romans 16:25-27)
  - a. This point must be clearly understood - they did not receive God's approval because they were obedient. The obedience was an outcome of their faith.
  - c. Ephesians 2:8-9 is absolutely clear that we are saved - receive God's approval - by faith
  - d. We are told that true faith results in an altered person (2 Cor. 5:17; James 2:14,21-23)
  - e. James is not teaching we are made righteous by works - he clearly states, **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness**
  - f. I found this quote that summed it up well: **What matters is not faith and works; it is not faith or works; it is faith that works.**

# Where Else In Scripture Is Receiving God's Approval Taught?

1. Turn to Romans 4:1-6
  - a. In Romans 4:2 we have the statement of Abraham being justified - this word means to declare righteous.
  - b. In justification God does an amazing thing: He takes from me my sin (because Jesus died for it) and He imputes to me Jesus' righteousness; as a result I can call him **The Lord My Righteousness**.
  - c. Once again, justification is not to the one who works for it; but as a result of justification He also sanctifies us and will one day glorify us.
  - d. Justification has a legal, forensic sense to it; approved by God has a personal sense, God personally attests that we are His and declared righteous.
2. Consider also one of my favorite passages, Zechariah 3:1-5; this speaks of Joshua the High Priest and his justification is pictured for us.
  - a. In this passage the angel of the Lord is an appositive statement, the Angel (Messenger) who is the Lord.
  - c. The LORD (Yahweh) rebukes Satan in that day and every day he accuses you and He proclaims, isn't this one a burning stick snatched from the fire?" Why were you snatched from the fire? You were chosen.
  - d. What does God for you and me is pictured here: He takes away your filthy garments, soiled with your rebellion, you faithlessness, your lack of love for God and your neighbor, and He clothes you with pure garments.

## How Should This Change Me?

1. The Old Covenant saints noted in Hebrews 11 were frail people, like you and me; they were not perfect people.

2. What was the basis of their being approved? By faith. Thirty-one times in Hebrews 11 the basis of faith is either stated or alluded to.
3. Where else do we see this? We have already looked at Romans 4:2-5
4. Now here is the danger - faith is not something you work up in yourself. Abraham and all these others, where did their faith come from? The same place as our faith comes from - Ephesians 2:8-9
5. Perhaps it is apparent but let me recap - I am approved by God, I am justified by God, on the basis of faith and that faith is a gift from God.
6. Understanding this truth two other passages come in like a sledgehammer:
  - a. Romans 8:31-39
  - b. 2 Cor. 4:8-18
7. How do I know that God has approved me - because He gives me faith as the token of that approval
  - a. Abraham was called the friend of God - God knew firsthand who Abraham was and today, for all those who have faith in Christ as their savior, God knows you firsthand and He testifies before all - this one is mine!
  - b. This one has been snatched from the fire! Don't call him what he or she what they were - call them what they are: child of God!
8. This should cause you and me to respond as we read in Hebrews 12:1, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us.