

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

The Characters of Faith (Part 2 – Hebrews 11:4-40) Hebrews 11:5-6 (Enoch)

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. 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.

I would like you to imagine if you will a seemingly unusual and dark scenario. As you are going about your everyday life, getting up, eating breakfast, going to school or work and the like, God literally and vocally interrupts your routine and tells you that on a certain day a great and dreadful event is going to take place – His coming wrath and judgment on a sinful world – at which time any who had not responded to “the good news of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) – the good news that God has provided a way of escape from this judgment, a joyful way, and a way that is lived by following the example of Jesus – that these would eternally perish in the torment and eternal fire of hell.

- How would you respond?
- What would begin to go through your mind?
- Would you be concerned about yourself?
- Would you be concerned for others?
- Would such a direct message impact your life?
- Would you even believe it possible?

I am amazed at how little we who profess Christ really consider and talk about His return. We have been given a direct revelation from God, a revelation that informs us that Jesus has come one time already, some 2000 years ago, manifesting the love, mercy and grace of God by offering Himself as the substitute, the sacrifice for the death-deserving sin of His people. But we have been informed as well that Jesus will come a second time, at some point in the future, only rather than expressing primarily the love of God and salvation, He will be expressing the wrath of God and damnation upon any who refuse to see Jesus as their only hope, as their only way to eternal life with God. To see Jesus in such a way, as the only Savior, the only means of being right with God both now and forever is something that must be and can only be accepted by faith. Remember that we defined faith as a *firm and fully confident trust in the person, promises and provision of God through Jesus Christ resulting in behavior consistent with the Word of God.*

- By faith we are to see the un-seeable, a holy God that demands perfection in those who would dwell with Him.

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- By faith we are to know that the only means of such perfection is by believing that Jesus Christ alone has met the perfect demands of God and that if we find ourselves “in Him” – that is longing for His perfection to be our perfection, His righteousness our righteousness and His life our life –

If we by faith believe that Jesus will rescue those of us who call upon Him from the coming wrath of God against all sin and by faith then walk, that is live our lives according to His Word and His ways – then the words of 1 Thessalonians 1:9 are true to us, that we have **“turned to God from idols** (an idol being anything we place before or in the place of God) **to serve the living and true God?”**

By faith we must believe that which has only been written down and has not yet come to pass – namely that Jesus is coming a second time and this coming will be in reference to judgment; to separate the sheep, that is believers, from the goats, that is unbelievers, the sheep to enter into paradise with Jesus and the goats to enter into **“the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...”** (Matthew 25:41). Does such a truth cause you to desire **“to wait for [God’s] Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath”** (1 Thessalonians 1:10)?

I asked you *how* you would respond if God interrupted *your* day with a message of impending judgment on you and this entire sin-filled world. Maybe you are thinking, “I don’t think God would do it that way.” Maybe you are thinking God is too kind and merciful to ever do a thing like this. But before you write this off as being too far-fetched, I would have you know that this is what God did literally to at least one man in history, a man whose short account is recorded in Genesis 5, a man by the name of Enoch - and in a figurative sense, God has done this for each one of us here this morning. The Word of God not only contains words of life and peace, but also words of cursing and damnation. People like to hear the cheery side of the Scriptures, accepting the love of God without contemplating His wrath; the mercy of God without reference to His judgment. But at a point in time, God interrupted Enoch’s life with a message of wrath and judgment, a message he believed in, a message he responded to, a message that by faith he had confidence that God would do what He said He would do. And, as we will come to see in our exploration of Hebrews 11:5-6 and some other passages, this faith that Enoch exercised is a faith that not only believed certain things about God, but also became the means by which Enoch would live for God in such a way as to warrant a special notation in the Word of God as a man who **“was pleasing to God.”**

What was it about the faith of Enoch by which God gave such a noteworthy commendation? I must say that it is worth finding out. Remember that the author of Hebrews is offering these examples of faith for us to see the fullness of faith, that we might learn what faith looks like and then, by the grace of God, emulate that faith - live that faith. I want the faith of Enoch, as well as the faith of Able and all the others in this chapter, but what was it about Enoch’s faith that we can apply to our own lives of faith?

To answer that question, we are going to have to look not only at what Hebrews 11:5 tells us about Enoch, but also journey back into Genesis, for the author of Hebrews would have presumed that his readers know something about Enoch. I submit to you then that there are three aspects of Enoch’s faith to first appreciate and then apply to our own lives. These three aspects of faith are found in Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5. Then, once we

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consider these aspects, we will see an additional truth - an application of this faith in Hebrews 11:6. So then, our outline is as follows: The faith of Enoch recognized...

- I. An Approaching of the Judgment of God
- II. An Anticipation of the Presence of God
- III. An Aspiration of Living for God
- IV. An Application for the People of God

I. The Faith of Enoch Recognized an Approaching of the Judgment of God

We begin then with the first three words of Hebrews 11:5, **“By faith Enoch...”** We stop here because there is an assumption on the part of the author that the readers of this text be familiar with Enoch. His story is found in Genesis 5:21-24 (if you would turn there). Let me read this account and then clue you in on some significant thoughts.

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.

This seemingly innocuous passage is actually jammed packed with Gospel truth. Whether or not the first readers of Hebrews 11 would have understood this I do not know, but we will unpack this as quickly as possible.

I would have you note from 5:21 that in the 65th year of Enoch, something significant happened. To be sure it is always a wonder to become a father. It may even be more wondrous, at least in our day and age, that Enoch became a father at the age of 65. But this is not the emphasis of the passage. Rather, at the age of 65 we are told that Enoch **“walked with God.”** Now before we really consider this, does this not tell us that for 65 years Enoch did not walk with God? Perhaps we might consider it wondrous that a 65 year old man came to faith in God at all – for this does not happen all that readily today. In Genesis 6:5 we are given some insight as to the times of Enoch, being told **“that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”** This is the climate and culture in which Enoch lived. The world was a sinful, God-rejecting place. Man was depraved, without God and sinful and lest we forget, the wages of sin has always been death. But God, while grieved by the condition of man and grieved at the need to eliminate sin, was yet a God of grace and made provision for anyone who would repent of his sin and trust in God for salvation. Yes, this provision would be by means of an Ark built by Noah, the great grandson of Enoch, but what if we learned that both the punishment of sin and this provision for escape from sin was foretold nearly 1000 years before it came to pass. Beloved, I submit to you that what changed the heart of Enoch was the grace of God by which God interrupted Enoch’s day, revealing to him both his own as well as the

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world's sinful condition, speaking to him concerning the approaching judgment and the promised means of escape and when Enoch heard these things, these plans, promises and provision of God, Enoch believed, repented of his sins and followed God.

Now what would make me say that God revealed such things to Enoch? I say to you consider the name of Enoch's son as we see there in verse 22 – Methuselah. Maybe that does not sound all that oppressive to us, but Methuselah's name has two meanings. It means either

- “man of the spear” – indicating a man who brings judgment or wrath, or,
- “when this man dies, then judgment.”

I don't know about you, but that is not the most joyful name to give to a son. Why did Enoch name his son this - Methuselah? I submit to you that God revealed His plan to judge mankind for its sinfulness to Enoch. Enoch repented and believed and began to proclaim to his culture the coming wrath of God by so naming his son, “when this man dies, then judgment.” And do you know what happened the very year that Methuselah died 969 years later – the great flood of Noah. By faith Enoch believed the message of man's sin, God's wrath as well as in God's grace for those who turn to Him.

Sometimes we wonder why more people do not respond to the gospel message – do we not? We would all agree that we believers need to do a much better job at simply communicating the truths of the gospel, including man being a sinner, not able to save himself, in need of a Savior who has come in the person of Jesus Christ, who promises forgiveness of sin and newness of life so that you can walk with Him if you but believe in Him. We need to do a better job at communicating the Gospel and our faith. But I say to you that another reason why people don't respond to the message of the impending wrath of God against sin is because of the hardness of man's heart. They either do not believe at all or they think that they can put off a decision until the last moment. How many people who lived during the time of Methuselah, who knew him by name, a name that meant, “when he dies, then comes judgment” did anything about it? At most there were only eight – Noah, his wife along with his three sons and their wives. Everyone else put it off, disregarded the message and simply didn't care. Oh, let us pray for the hearts of our neighbors, the hearts of our co-workers and the hearts of our family members to be softened, opened by the Spirit of God to receive the truth and believe in both the penalty of sin as well as the remedy for sin found only in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

II. The Faith of Enoch recognized an Anticipation of the Presence of God

With this background we can now consider the second aspect of Enoch's faith, something that is revealed to us in both Genesis 5:22, 24 as well as in Hebrews 11:5 as the faith of Enoch recognized the anticipation of the presence of God. In reference back to Genesis 5:22-24 the author of Hebrews says in 11:5, **“By faith Enoch (who walked with God) was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”** Beloved, after some 300 years of walking with God, God took

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Enoch up, translated him into heaven. Three times in Hebrews 11:5 we are told this, stressing emphatically that God did something unique for Enoch. Why did God do this? I can think of four reasons, but before I give you those four, let me give you just one – God, in His wisdom and sovereignty, determined to take Enoch up without seeing death, just as He would do for one other in the Old Testament, that prophet named Elijah. But in addition to God's sovereign good will and pleasure there are at least four things we might consider.

First, Genesis 5:22 tells us that after Methuselah's birth **"Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years..."** This is not a casual statement for it is repeated in verse 24, the idea being that Enoch had constant and unbroken fellowship with his God. The implication of the text is that from his conversion until God took him to heaven, Enoch walked with God by faith, constantly, pleasing Him. Enoch had a faith that anticipated the presence of God both while here on earth as well as in heaven. Beloved, do you desire this kind of faith? Do you possess this kind of faith? This is the only kind of faith that will keep us walking with Jesus from conversion to glorification; for if we are not walking with the Lord while here on earth, it stands to reason that we will not be walking with the Lord in heaven. Do you have this faith?

A second truth we can glean here is that entrance into heaven is only by faith in God, by trusting in what He has done for you, not in what you can do for yourself. The faith of Enoch is assurance of salvation based upon the merits of God not the merits of man. Notice in Hebrews 11:5 that nothing is mentioned of Enoch's "works", rather it was **"by faith [that he] was taken up so that he would not see death..."** The anti-God climate in which Enoch lived would have produced severe trials of faith, yet his faith is what assured him of God's presence in his life, a presence that would see him through to the end. Oh that we might have the faith of Enoch, a faith that remembers truths like that of Romans 8:39, a faith that says, "...I am convinced..." that nothing, "...will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you are "in Christ" – walking with Him even as Enoch walked with God, then you can be assured of the presence of God in your life – you can anticipate it both now and for eternity.

A third truth to consider as to why God took Enoch up – as such an action of God demonstrated God's absolute power over death. Just back in Hebrews 9:27 we saw the general principle that says, **"...it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment..."** But what of Enoch and even of Elijah many centuries later? These **"would not see death"** because God took them into heaven before dying. Beloved, it may be the God's ordained plan that people die because sin has entered into the world bringing death. But God is greater than death. Christ defeated death according to 1 Corinthians 15. The truth is that death no longer has any power over the believer. Jesus said in John 11:25-26, **25 "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."** And do you remember how Jesus ended this statement? He asked Martha, **"Do you believe this?"** Do you anticipate resurrection to life in Jesus? Do you anticipate and long for such unbroken fellowship and joy in the presence of Christ?

The final truth I would have you consider from the faith of Enoch, a faith that it to be our own is what I have just been saying, that faith anticipates being forever in the presence of God, for if we know that **"by faith Enoch was taken up"** into heaven by God, then we also who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ must know that one glorious day we will be gathered up

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together to be with our Lord and Savior forever and ever because He promised He was coming back to take us home. Is this not the promise of Jesus in John 14:2-3? **2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.**

And while I am not seeking to discuss the timing of the rapture of the church, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 cannot be denied as to teach that there will be a taking up of believers, a taking up just like that of Enoch and Elijah in which those who are alive and walking with Christ will by faith, not see death – **“Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”** Do we have a faith that anticipates the presence of God?

Enoch did not walk with God in vain – his faith was rewarded. So too does the believer in Christ today have such a promise for we read in 1 Peter 1:6-9 – **“In this [in the promise of your faith] you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

By faith a anticipate and desire both the current presence of God in my life by His Holy Spirit and a future presence of God as I spend eternity with Him, that which is called **“the salvation of your souls.”**

III. The Faith of Enoch Recognized the Aspiration of Living for God.

Hebrews 11:5 ends, as we have already noted, with a most insightful glimpse as what the faith of God produces in the life of a believer – faith produces a life that pleases God. **“By faith Enoch...obtained the witness that...he was pleasing to God.”**

Most people see religion as things they themselves will or will not do in order to please God. Sadly, even many in Christianity believe that their eternal standing with God is based upon what they will or will not do, that somehow God will accept them as righteous, save them from their sins, and take them to heaven based upon their own merits. In the scriptures, salvation is never dependent upon the works of man. Rather, salvation is secured by Christ and the proof of salvation in the life of the believer is “good works” – not “good works” that save, but rather “good works” that demonstrate the reality of salvation.

Let me give you an example. Medical technology is getting to a place where you can actually have your entire body scanned, this scan being able to detect possible cancer, heart disease or other life-threatening ailments. If I told you that I was healthy, that there was nothing physically wrong with me, does that prove that I am healthy? No, unless you see something that demonstrates the reality of my health, you could concluded that I might yet have a physical ailment. So, I go and have a medical scan and it prints out this map of my body and I give you those scans that reveal that I am, just as I have said, healthy. Let me ask you, did those scans make me healthy? No, they are simply the proof, the outworking of what was already true in me. Likewise, a God-pleasing, faith-filled believer does and must perform

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“good works” – but these, like the scan, can’t save him, they are only the proof that salvation is present in his life. Enoch was pleasing, in fact the Greek word means, “well-pleasing” or “exceedingly pleasing” to God, not by his work, but by God-given faith.

Enoch **“walked with God”** (Genesis 5:24) and Hebrews 11:5 confirms that he **“was pleasing to God.”** But I ask you, what was Enoch doing that pleased God? While we know that Enoch prophesied about the judgment of God on ungodliness, this being told to us in Jude 14-15, we are told in our text that it wasn’t what Enoch did that pleased God, but rather verse 5 begins with **“by faith”** not with “by works.” Further, Hebrews 11:6 tells us the timeless principle that **“without faith it is impossible to please Him...”**

The lesson is this, that if we want to please God in our lives, we are to **“walk by faith, not by sight”** (2 Corinthians 5:7); for genuine faith is only **“fixing our eyes upon Jesus”** as the sole “author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Let us not entertain a faith that looks to ourselves, at what we are or are not doing to please God, for true faith knows that only Christ has pleased God and so by faith I trust that what Jesus has done to please God, He has done for me so that in Christ, I too please God. Faith’s aspiration then is to first trust and proclaim only the sufficiency of God through Jesus Christ for salvation and then secondly to manifest the reality of this trust by living after the pattern of Christ, to walk in a manner consistent with the Word of Christ. Is this your aspiration for if it is then this is a good indicator of faith? Let us prayerfully cultivate such a faith that it may reveal more and more our dependency on Christ and Christ alone. Enoch’s faith was not dead and passive but rather was very much alive and active. This is the only kind of faith that will please God; for it will result in a God-given testimony of one who is pleasing to God.

IV. An Application for the People of God

I know that I have already gone quite long, but bear with me as we close that I might offer you a few applications. I see Hebrews 11:6 as a summary of the principles we have already considered. First we have the reminder that salvation and pleasing God is not about what we can do in ourselves, but rather by faith, believing the truth of Galatians 2:20 – **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”** For we are told, that **“without faith it is impossible [literally – man is impotent] to please Him.”**

Second, we learn that faith believes in the person and message of God – **“for he who comes to God must believe that He is...”** Enoch, after not believing, not trusting and not acknowledging God came to believe that God is, that God existed and that God communicated truth to him that needed to be responded to, to be obeyed. Enoch responded by faith, believing and walking with God. Do you believe that God truly is, that He not only exists, but that He has communicated truth to you, that you are a sinner who needs His grace and mercy as found only in Christ, who needs such grace to even live a life that pleases God? Are you going to do what Enoch did, who upon hearing the message of salvation and of the coming judgment, started walking with God? Hear the words of Acts 17:30-31, **“...but [God] now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”**

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And finally, we see the great benefit of faith, for the one who has such a faith in God as has been described also believes, according to the end of Hebrews 11:6, that God **“is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”** What is the reward of walking with God, be it for 30 years or 300 years? Jesus is the reward, to dwell with the Savior for eternity. Remember what God said to Abraham in Genesis 15:3, **“I am a shield to you; Your very great reward.”** Faith believes that the greatest joy, the greatest blessing, the greatest reward is being in the presence of the Creator – to be taken up to be with God.

I trust this faith of Enoch is a faith you desire. I pray that this faith of Enoch can be rightly said to be your faith as well. I trust that this faith of Enoch is found in you; that it has shown you the judgment of God that is coming upon sin, that it has caused you to think about where you will spend eternity, that it has turned you to Jesus as your only hope, that it has turned you to God in repentance of your sins and with an aspiration of living a pleasing life unto Him. By faith remember that it is only by the grace of God given to you through Jesus Christ that you have the hope of eternal life – otherwise you would be on the way to hell, lost forever in torments for your sins. By faith remember the Blood of the Lamb of God shed on the cross for your sins. By faith remember the empty tomb that proves the resurrection of Christ, that proves His power over death and sin and proves that those in Him have been made accepted and therefore you, like Enoch, may walk with and please God all the days of your life. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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May 27, 2007*