

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Introduction

In Hebrews 11.5-6, we have another illustration of faith. This time it is from the life of Enoch. He was the seventh patriarch descending from Adam and Eve in the line of Seth, and he was the great grandfather of Noah (Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah). There is a paucity of information about Enoch. Besides Genesis 5 and our text in Hebrews, the only other mention of him in Scripture is in Luke 3 that traces Enoch back to Adam: **Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God (37-38)** and Jude that tells us that Enoch was a prophet that foretold the coming of the Lord's judgment on the ungodly **to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him (1.16).**

From our text in Hebrews, we have two main things to cover regarding Enoch as an example of faith and faithfulness: the blessings he received by faith, and the faith by which we receive those blessings.

1A. The blessings that Enoch received by faith

Let us consider both sides of this point: the blessings of Enoch and his faith.

1B. His blessings

There are two blessings stated in 11.5.

1) First, he was taken

There is an emphasis placed on this event. We have the fact that he was taken (5a, **Enoch was taken**), God's action of taking him (5d, **because God had taken him**), and then the timing of this taking (5e, **Now before he was taken he was commended**).

The record of Enoch in Genesis 5 is very brief telling us of his days and his disappearance: **Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him (23-24).** His life stands in striking contrast to that of Abel who was murdered by his outraged evil brother. Enoch walked with God and God took him.

The context of this taking is the fall because this genealogy takes us from Adam to Noah. As Paul tells us in Romans, by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world and death by sin for all have sinned (Rom. 5.12). Death is a consequence of sin. It is not something normal for the human family; it may be regular but it is abnormal. The powerful testimony of the genealogy in which we find Enoch is the repetition of a three word refrain stating the fact of death: **and he died** (Adam, 5, Seth, 8, Enosh, 11, Kenan, 14, Mahalalel, 17, Jared, 20 *and after Enoch*, Methusaleh, 27, and Lamech, 31). Clearly, the implication is what we have in Hebrews 11.5, namely, he was taken so that he would not die: ⁵ **By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him.**

Death is not something that controls God; He has the power of life and death. He can spare His people from it as is the case with Enoch, Elijah, and the church at the time of Christ's coming. Some of us may not see death. Note the description of those who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

“Dead in Christ” implies that “we who are alive” are alive in Christ as well. Central here, with all that is not said, is the fact that all (the dead in Christ and those alive in Christ at His coming) will meet Him and remain with Him: **so we will always be with the Lord**. Enoch’s experience reaches far beyond his own life. It is also a picture and a promise of the future for all who walk with the Lord in the light of His word.

2) God commended him

Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God (11.5e). Again, this is a truly remarkable fact because we know that Enoch was a sinner for Scripture tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3.23). How can a sinner receive God’s commendation and approval? On top of that, how can a sinner please God? This brings us to his faith.

2B. His faith

There is no mention of his faith in Genesis 5 but we can get some perspective on it from some basic facts. We know (per the book of Jude) that he had confidence in the holiness and justice of God that *strongly contrasts* with ungodliness. The just Judge of heaven and earth will execute judgment. Nonetheless, Enoch walked with God. How could he do this? He had to trust the Lord that He would allow this access to His presence. He must have had the basic promise that his forefather, Abel had, specifically, faith in God’s promise to deal with sin through sacrifice. Thus, he boldly entered the presence of God and walked with Him in some full and faithful way. That pleased the Lord.

We wonder how a sinner can please God: is it possible? It is *not* possible; it is *impossible except by faith*: **And without faith it is impossible to please him** (11.6a). Accordingly, by faith, Enoch had the blessings of God’s commendation and the unusual fact that God took him straight to heaven without death.

2A. The faith by which we receive those blessings (God’s blessings)

Note the transitional phrase in Hebrews 11.6, **whoever would draw near to God must believe**. All the blessings of Enoch are in the experience of drawing near to God. We (whoever) draw near to God to walk with Him and please Him. Moreover, because Enoch prefigures the taking of the church to glory at the end of the age, we have the promise of victory over death as well, whether around death or through it.

11.6b explains the kind of faith that is required to please God (draw near to and walk with Him). This is the faith that the writer encourages us to exercise.

1) Believe that He is (for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists)

Believe that He exists, that He is there, is part of the point here, but it is actually more implicit than explicit (it is presupposed as the existence of God is presupposed in all of Scripture). What is explicit is that we are to believe not simply that He is but that He is the great I am, Yahweh, the covenant keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Ex. 3.14-15).

In order to draw near to God, walk with Him, and please Him, we must have “confident recognition of the complete trustworthiness of his promises” (Hughes 460). We must trust Him, rely upon His goodness, and submit to His word in willing obedience to Him. The duty here is to trust Him, rely upon Him, submit to Him, and obey Him.

2) Believe that He rewards those who seek Him (for whoever would draw near...must believe...)

Note that the direction of thought here is that He rewards those who seek Him. This is not an anti-reward sentiment. But it surely puts general rewards into perspective because in order to draw near to God, to walk with Him, and to please Him we must have a seeking faith that seeks Him first and foremost. He is the reward that opens the way to all rewards and of course puts them in a distinctly subordinate place (Gen. 15.1: **I am your shield, your very great reward**). Rewards are not bad; it is not wrong to seek them. It is not wrong to seek the reward of a good day’s work. The point is that reward-seeking has a chief and ultimate goal: having God as our reward. That, for

example, is why you seek to do a good days work for a good days pay, namely, to receive His commendation, to please Him, to walk with Him in the task of doing the good days work.

Conclusion

Consider what it means to live by faith seeking God, to walk with Him and to please Him in accord with Enoch's example.

1) You can go for a walk with God

It is like going for a walk with a good friend or with a loved one; only this is better because this means that you enter the presence of God in a special way. He is everywhere (omnipresent); He is the Father in heaven; He dwells with His people when they assemble. In the OT, He was present in the temple (manifested His presence in a special way and related to His people in a special way). Now in new temple worship, He dwells in the church. The point is that He enters (allows us to enter) into a special relationship of intimacy and fellowship. We talk like this regarding communion. We have communion with God every Sunday; He is with us every Sunday. What makes the communion sacrament any different? It is that God uses that means as a way to bless us in a distinct way, to remind us of Christ and to assure and reassure us of His good will toward us. It is part of our walk with God. It involves fellowship, companionship, and growing knowledge of God by His gracious self-revelation. It is through the word that we have this experience. It is not some kind of direct unilateral revelation that God gives to certain people at special times, but it is direct and personal by the Spirit through the word of Scripture (Abide in me and I in you... with my word abiding in you, your joy will be full, Jn. 15).

Thus, there is a spiritual discipline here (not that we control God in any way). He has appointed the way: abide in Him, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Do not quench the Spirit or grieve the Spirit; seek Him with all your heart by His word and He will bless you.

2) Abiding fellowship transforms the worst circumstances into times of joy

Because He is there with us, we are there with Him. We can walk by His side in the way (cf. the road to Emmaus: **Luke 24:15 Jesus himself drew near and went with them; Luke 24:32 Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?**) Our hearts will burn within us when experience this fellowship with our risen Lord by faith.

Ordinary days even if challenging, mundane, and difficult are joyful days as a foretaste of heaven (to be with him and feel the warmth of His pleasure); to feel the warmth of the sun illustrates the warmth of fellowship with God any where we may go in this world He created and through which He speaks to us; this in turn illustrates the warmth of His word and its sweetness: Ps. 19 the latter half: **⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.**

3) Ultimately, and supremely, God is your reward.

He grants access and fellowship, joy of companionship with Him. He gives a sense of His presence. Again, this is not something we control, but it is something that we find on the path of seeking by prayer for the Spirit's instruction, meditation, and abiding in the word: **³ Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God** (Ps. 43.3-5).

Seeking is not required because God is hidden from view and will not be found. He reveals Himself in every fact of creation. There is nothing obscure; His eternal nature and divine power is clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rom. 1.20). Thus, seeking is God's requirement for finding. We must seek to know Him better and better. If you seek you will find. Seek him and you will find that He has been seeking you all along (I sought the Lord and afterward I knew, He moved my soul to seek Him seeking me, *Trinity Hymnal*, 397)

4) You can know His presence through the valleys too

This is not just a mountain top experience. Direct your thoughts to Him, your focus and concentration then when you take up your activities, you do so before Him. Even when you concentrate on your work, raking leaves, nailing boards or laying brick, you seek to do these things in His presence (before Him; knowing this) for His glory and thus according to His will out of love for Him in gratitude for His goodness and greatness and graciousness to you. You then look forward to the time when you can return in thought and focus on the Lord by reading and prayer, fellowship with other believers in the things of God, Sunday worship for preaching and the special focus of communion.

5) But we cannot walk alone

We need the church family and one another's love. There is much in the historical statement that "you cannot have God as your father if you do not have the church as your mother." This is not speaking of a denomination, but of fellowship and the diligent use of the means of grace both public and private. The writer of Hebrews will have us remember the deceitfulness of sin: **Hebrews 3:12-13** ¹² **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.** ¹³ **But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

6) Focus on Christ and His will

Those in Christ will be taken without death or through and beyond it

At His return: note the language of caught up and taken away; Enoch prefigures the walk of all saints whether they die in the Lord or live until His return.

By faith in Christ and by union with Him in His death and resurrection, we have the privilege of walking with God by a seeking faith that relies on Him as the covenant keeping God of Scripture. And, significantly, *walking with God is something permanent and abiding. Those who walk with God transcend death.* Just as Abel, by faith, lives beyond His death, likewise, all of God's people, by faith, transcend death and literally never die. He that lives, walks with, and believes in me shall live even if he dies; He that believes in me and walks with me shall never die. He shall never cease walking with me in fellowship, communion, and companionship. To walk with God in this life is to walk with Him in the next life. If you walk with Him in fellowship on earth, then you will walk with Him in fellowship in heaven. In its fullest sense, death will not overtake you. He will take you; He will take you home to be with Him to continue your walk with Him uninterrupted.

Physical death has no sting for those who walk with God. Their death is precious in the eyes of the Lord. It is better for them to depart and be with the Lord; they continue the walk of this earth because the Lord has more work for them to do. When the work is complete, the walking will not end. Death will not end it. Being with God means that God is with you. Therefore, you are more than a conqueror; death has no sting for you, death has no victory over you.

It was God in His Sovereignty that took Enoch without death and Abel through a violent death. But both transcended death. Neither lost the war with death. It was God in His sovereignty that took the founder of WTS, Machen at age fifty-five by bi-lateral pneumonia and who took our beloved brother Dave by pneumonia at age fifty-seven. God in His sovereignty spared our sister Vivian through her bout with double pneumonia. She has more work yet to do on this earth in her walk with God. Her life reminds us of the unfolding of the purposes of God regarding our lives. We too have work yet to do; that is why we are still here. But the work is a walk. We go to work. We take one step after another to get to and do our work. Ultimately, all of our steps of our journey in life make up our walk with God.

Of course, to draw near to God, to walk with Him, and to please Him calls us to a seeking faith. Seek and you will find is our Lord's sure promise. Seek Him and God will be your reward.

May we fall down before the majesty of the triune God to whom belongs all glory, amen.