

Hebrews 11:5-6

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[0:00] Please take out your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you this morning, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. Our text today is Hebrews chapter 11, verses 5 and 6.

As we continue our study of the book of Hebrews, be reminded that this is a letter written pastorally to a group of Christians who had suffered much for their faith and were feeling a tug to abandon that faith.

Its author has been laboring to remind them of the excellencies of Jesus Christ and to encourage them to endure faithfully to the end.

If you've been with us, I hope that you have been receiving the very same encouragement in our study. Recall that at the end of chapter 10, the author says, verse 39, But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

And we have been talking at length about salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And the way that having been saved by grace, we persevere faithfully.

[1:16] We show ourselves to be followers of Jesus Christ with the way we live. We show Him to be loved by us by the way we live. So do our works save us?

No. But it is a faith in the person and work of Christ that saves us and produces in us the desire and the ability to do good work.

The author of Hebrews went on to describe this faith. And it's where we find ourselves in the text developing out this idea found in verse 1 and 2.

He says, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it, the people of old received their commendation or their approval.

God was pleased with them because of their faith. And he has begun to give a series of examples of these people of old who received their commendation by faith in God and in His promises.

[2:26] Last week we looked at Abel, the very first martyr. And this week we're going to look at Enoch. Now at the very outset of today's sermon, I want you to know that I intend to preach a very short sermon on verses 5 and 6.

That's the plan anyway. It's what I'm purposing to do for two reasons. Number one, because the character whose faith we are going to consider is a bit of a mystery. Not a whole lot going on in the biblical narrative with Enoch.

Secondly, and more importantly, because I want to allow some time to share with you some changes that we are going to make to our meeting times. And do not have many opportunities to speak to you all at the same time.

You're here, you're seated. This is a good opportunity for this. We're going to try to make some space for that to give some explanation to that very end. Now, if you were a guest with us this morning, I just want you to know this is not normative.

15 minute-ish sermon, 20 minutes maybe, we'll see how that goes. It's not normally what we do together. We really want to work out and develop out a passage very, very clearly.

[3:42] But it's going to be important for us, I think, this morning to spend some time considering some potential changes for us. And the way that we meet together. So that said, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

That it was written for his glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 5 and 6.

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.

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.

Now, we can read the original account of Enoch's life of faithful endurance in Genesis chapter 5, verses 21 through 24.

[4:41] You don't have to turn there with me, but you can if you would like to. I'm going to read it for the sake of time now. It reads, When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah.

Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus, all the days of Enoch were 365 years.

Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him. So, Enoch is barely mentioned in the biblical narrative.

We have very few facts about his life, but what we do have is significant and, if well considered, will serve our faithful pursuit of God.

And so, we're going to look. This will be the outline for today's text. Number one, at Enoch's end. Number two, at Enoch's walk. And number three, at Enoch's faith.

[5:47] So, let's look for a moment at Enoch's end. You see this in the first part of verse 5. Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him.

So, he went to go be with God. And in Genesis 5, verse 24, Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch lived for 365 years, although comparatively a very short time. All the contemporaries of his day lived three times-ish longer than he lived.

I learned a fun new word. I'm just going to share it for the joy of sharing it this morning. A great word for pre-flood time is antediluvian. I think that's really fantastic.

So, his antediluvian life was a fairly short life in the scope of what was happening in that day. For further joy, I just want to point out how very long 365 years is.

[6:58] And Kent Hughes, in his commentary, does a neat job of this. I'm going to read this to you just in brief. He writes, When Enoch celebrated his second century in 1827, Jedediah Smith blazed the first trail from Southern California to Fort Vancouver, and at the other end of the country, New Orleans, would celebrate its first Mardi Gras when students from Paris introduced the Shrove Tuesday event.

In 1927, on his 300th birthday, the cake would have melted from the heat of the candles. Charles Lindbergh would pilot the Spirit of St. Louis across the Atlantic to Paris. Babe Ruth would hit 60 home runs, and the first talkie, which would have been a movie with a soundtrack, called The Jazz Singer with Al Johnson, would be produced.

And finally, in 1992, the whole world would know of his departure in one instant through satellite cable communication. It's a long, long time for Enoch to walk with God.

And I don't know about you, but this life feels long on some days. It just seems like it's never going to end.

I am now, for some of you in the room, I'll say only 39. For some of you, I'll go, I'm 39. I'll be 40 in just a few short months, and it just doesn't feel like I'm in the middle of this life.

[9:00] It seems to have gone on already for so long, and I cry out so many days, Come, Lord Jesus. Like, today would be a wonderful day for it all to end. I'm being asked, right, to faithfully persevere to the end.

And we find in our text in Hebrews 11 an example of a man who faithfully persevered so much longer than any of us will have to do so.

I think that's why it's wonderfully placed. I think that's why the author of Hebrews, as he's walking through the biblical narrative, uses this example of Enoch.

We don't know why exactly God spared him from seeing death. Why is it that he was taken up early? The narrative does not tell us.

But this is all we know concerning his end. He walked with God, and then God took him. So that was Enoch's end. Secondly, let's take a look at Enoch's walk.

[10:05] Hebrews 11, last part of verse 5 says, Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. And in Genesis chapter 5, verse 22, we're told that Enoch walked with God.

Enoch pleased God because he walked with him. To walk with someone suggests a mutual agreement, and in the case of God, a mutual agreement of the soul.

Amos chapter 3, in verse 3, we can read, Do two walk together unless they have agreed to meet? Enoch oriented his life in the way of his God.

Enoch was heading in God's direction. And this was not always pleasant for Enoch. Interestingly, in the New Testament, if we read Jude's letter, we can read that Enoch was a prophet.

And he was given words to speak to the people that God's judgment was coming. You can find yourself very unpopular very quickly for saying such things.

[11:18] Jude writes in verse 14 and 15, It was also about these, and he's referencing ungodly people, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, and he here cites Enoch, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of 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.

He was given a message that in his walk with God, he was meant to deliver. So this was not always an easy task laid before him.

So we need not think that Enoch, in his antediluvian world, lived in a day that wasn't also hostile toward God.

We can find much relation to him in this time. Enoch was willing to prophesy for God because he had deep fellowship with God.

He cared about God and his ways. He feared God and he did not fear man. So Enoch walked with God. And then third, and we'll spend a bit more time here, Enoch's faith.

[12:46] Enoch's faith. Verse 6 says, Hebrews chapter 11, 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.

We must have faith for God to be pleased with us. And the object of that faith matters greatly.

Not willy-nilly faith. Not just belief in something, but faith in a specific set of things. And he gives us two of them that are a bit of umbrella statements, but faith first that he exists.

God himself is the beginning point of our faith in him. Not a God of our making, but God as he is.

In new measure in our day, there are many who do not believe that there is a God at all. This type of thinking and thought process just runs rampant in our day.

[13:55] Many ask that question on the college campus. Is there a God? We must start with that very foundation that yes, in fact, there is a God.

The fact that our culture is rejecting reality that there is a God should not surprise us. Paul spoke of this very same phenomenon in his day. Romans chapter 1, verse 18 and following.

He says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. The created world cries out that there is a God, a creator God who is internal in power and has a divine nature.

[15:06] This can be perceived clearly, but in unrighteousness, that truth is suppressed. Even the demons are outpacing much of our world.

James 2.19 we read, You believe that God is one you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. We must believe that God created the world, but further, we must see him as a personal creator God.

This God made me, and this God made you. Psalm 139, verse 13. You formed my inward parts, You knitted me together in my mother's womb.

God didn't merely spin the world into existence, set some things in motion, and step back from it, but he is a personal creator God.

My number one go-to apologetic argument against the atheist is them. I say, you know what's most convincing to me that God exists? No, the what? I'll go, you.

[16:19] You are amazing. The fact that you have the mental faculty to even question the existence of God is rather astounding. All of those neurons firing off the way they do to make you say the things you say is pretty incredible.

We have physical abilities that are just, just astounding. You're my evidence that a God exists, and it usually stops the conversation. People don't want to debate that they're amazing.

You were fearfully and wonderfully made. You have a God that knit you together in your mother's womb, and he loves you immensely.

Further, we must believe that God revealed himself in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. We want to know who this God is.

We are to look at Christ. We can't pick one of the many gods of the world, pick our favorite adaptation, and go with that.

[17:27] We must worship God by worshipping Christ. Remember at the very beginning of our letter, the opening statement of Hebrews chapter 1, 1 and 2, long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. We must believe that God revealed himself. He exists and that he revealed himself in the person and in the work of Jesus Christ.

If we are to behold God, we are to do so by beholding Jesus. In Colossians chapter 1, there's a wonderful church hymn. It's largely believed that this was a song that was being sung in the early church.

And it makes it so clear that Jesus himself is God made flesh. That's the astounding thing that we're going to celebrate here in just a month.

We begin thinking about God incarnate, coming to earth, humbling himself to become a man that we might know him. We might know that he exists and know him personally.

[18:44] So Colossians chapter 1, beginning in verse 15 and following reads, He, being Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This is packed full of realities about who Jesus is. As we are a people meant to have a faith that God exists, right?

[19:43] We see in this text, Jesus Christ, our God, as the creator. He made all things. We see him as the sustainer. He holds all things together.

He is the goal of all of that, right? That praise would be offered up to him. He is the king ruling over the world and specifically the church.

And he is the reconciler, right? Bringing people who are enemies of God to a peaceful relationship with him. Astounding, astounding truths.

We must believe that God exists, and we must have faith that he has revealed himself in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. We also must have faith, the author of Hebrew tells us, that he rewards those who seek him.

Right? The world of Enoch's day was horribly wicked. Genesis chapter 6, 11 through 13 says, Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

[20:49] And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them.

Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. So now this was past Enoch's day. Enoch had already been taken when this event took place.

But we saw in his prophecy found in Jude, right, that the world was already corrupted. He did not live in an easy day in which to be a faithful follower of God.

But Enoch, by faith, resisted the corruption of his day and was rewarded for it. So what was his reward? If we're to have faith that God rewards those who seek him, what is that reward?

I think it comes in many forms, with comfort and peace and joy. But ultimately and finally, the greatest and highest reward is God himself.

[21:55] Enoch walked with God and then was taken up. To where? To be with God.

God was his reward forevermore. Christian people, we must have as our highest love our God.

You can imagine heaven filled with all the pleasures that we imagine heaven has and God's not there and you would be content with such a place.

You may not be a Christian. The worship of heaven, the joy of heaven is centered on the presence of God. That he is there, that he exists and that he is for us.

Right? He is our God and we are his people. The bulletin has a quote on it as it does every week.

This week's from Richard Sibbes, Puritan preacher who said, when we come to be religious, we lose not our pleasure, but translate it.

[23:02] Before we fed on common notions, but now we live on holy truths. So Enoch is another in a series of examples of people who endured faithfully to the end.

Right? He endured much beyond what we are going to endure. 365 years he walked with God. May we be a persevering people who, by our faith in the existence of God as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ and in the reward of God himself, preserve our souls.

Let's pray together.