

God—Pleasing Preachers Part 2

a sermon in the series
Hebrews: An Epistle of Encouragement

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Hebrews 11:5-6

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Oh, I pray that it is the desire of everyone to whom I speak—that it is his or her desire above all other desires—to please the Lord. Yet, I think that sometimes we are mistaken about what really pleases the Lord. We sprinkle into the pot of religion a few rules as ingredients, and then we stir it with a half-hearted commitment, thinking that's all that's necessary in order to please the Lord. We dare to think that our offering is a delectable morsel which He will enjoy to taste. It is the popular mindset that if we take a few moments at the end of the day, before we go to bed, and read a verse or two out of the Bible, we have pleased the Lord. If we manage to get through the week without losing control of our anger and saying something we ought not to say, then we come to church thinking we have done quite well.

But the Bible says something altogether different about what really pleases the Lord. The Bible says faith is what pleases Him. I speak of a faith that includes the mind but goes beyond the mind to encompass the heart as well. It's a faith that goes beyond just knowing facts and truly lays hold of God. It's a faith that draws us near to God. What good is faith if it doesn't bring us into fellowship with God? If it doesn't, you have nothing. If we only have the prospect of being forgiven of our sins but have not the fellowship of the triune God, then we have very little. If that is all I have, I would consider myself miserable. The joy of Christianity is God, God Himself! Forgiveness of sins, is that important? Oh, yes, that's wonderful, but it means nothing if I don't have God. Faith that does not bring us into the fellowship of God is not a faith born of the redeeming blood of heaven's Savior. It's not a faith that will justify, nor sanctify. It's not the faith that shall carry us on angel's wings and lead us to heaven when we die.

Today I want us to continue our walk through the book of Hebrews. We'll look at verses five and six today of the eleventh chapter and continue the thought of God-pleasing preachers. Last week, we looked at verse four and studied the life of Abel and how he was a preacher that pleased God. He pleased the Lord God because he had faith in God. He had the kind of faith that I'm talking

about that put him into fellowship and relationship with God. Such is the faith that gives a right understanding of the substitutionary and atoning death of Jesus Christ. Today, we're going to find out through the life of another God-pleasing preacher, Enoch, that faith produces a proper fellowship with God.

FAITH PRODUCES A PROPER FELLOWSHIP

Enoch had a fellowship with the invisible God that was so real that God took him. God moved him out of the realm of earth into the realm of heaven. The text used the word "translated." What does the word "translation" mean? A perfect example would be in the book of Acts chapter eight. Philip, having a great revival meeting in the region of Samaria, was told by God to go to Gaza, and there in that barren place was an Ethiopian eunuch riding in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. God told Philip to climb into the chariot and talk with the man. Philip leads the eunuch to the Lord and baptizes him. Immediately, the Spirit of the Lord takes Phillip and translates him, moves him to some other place so that he disappears before the eyes of the eunuch. That's what translation means. It's a supersonic, supernatural way of travel. God took Enoch out of this world without seeing death. He just moved him from earth to heaven.

In Genesis chapter five we read the short account of Enoch from which the writer of Hebrews gathered his example of God-pleasing faith. This is the only account by which the writer of Hebrews had any knowledge of Enoch. There is no other knowledge of him except in Jude.

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him (Genesis 5:21-24).

It is an interesting note here that Enoch probably didn't start walking with God until his first son, Methuselah, was born. It seems in the life of Enoch that becoming a father drove him to God. With the birth of his firstborn he decided, "I really need to walk holy before the Lord, that my son might have an example to follow." And so at the age of sixty-five he began to walk with God.

In the book of Jude we have this record of the life of Enoch. Jude tells us that Enoch was a preacher. Not only did he walk with God and had fellowship with God, but he also preached for the Lord. Should you walk close to God, you'll preach too. Maybe not in a pulpit, or a pastorate, but dear brother, you can't keep quiet. It'll be like fire shut up in your bones, and oh, that God would raise up men and women today who would have that Holy Ghost fire in them! It's a fire that comes from being in the presence of God, shut up alone with Him. Indeed it's a fire that rages, and nothing in heaven or earth can put it out. You cannot silence it, nor can you quench it. I pray this for you, that God would raise you up as preachers of righteousness. Not only because it's your moral obligation, but because it burns within you and you can't keep quiet. In Jude chapter one verse fourteen it says,

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 1:14-15).

Enoch preached to sinners and he warned them of the judgment of God. He told them of their ungodliness. And for three hundred years he preached that message. He was living in a time that was very quickly approaching the days of Noah. Sin became increasingly worse, and as Enoch began to see his society deteriorate, he preached against sin. Beloved, there is nothing wrong with preaching against sin. I know it's outdated. But sin necessitates preaching against it. As the Apostle Paul said, love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Love must decry evil. I commend and thank Franklin Graham this week, who is the only nationally known preacher that I have heard since September 11th to publicly say that Islam is not good and is not peaceable. If you've listened to the news you'll know he came under scathing rebuke and attack by many "preachers." I was saddened to hear that NBC News anchorman Tom Brokaw said that they had contacted Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson to see what they thought about Graham's remarks, to which they gave no comment. I call them cowards. Give us men like Enoch who will stand and say, "Thus saith the Lord, ungodliness shall not prevail and the Lord shall judge it."

Faith engenders a vital relationship with God. Did you notice in Genesis five it said twice, "He walked with God"? And in our text of Hebrews eleven and verse five, it said Enoch "pleased God." Certainly in the writer's of Hebrews mind, walking with God means pleasing God. Being saved doesn't mean walking with God. Paul makes it very clear in Galatians chapter five and verse sixteen, "Walk in the Spirit." And in verse twenty-five of Galatians five he says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Dear friend, you might be saved, but are you walking with God? You can have life by the Spirit of God, and all believers do so, but to walk with God and in His power is not automatic.

Walking With God Includes an Agreeing With God

Now if you are to walk with God you must agree with Him, for walking with God includes agreeing with God. Amos chapter three and verse three asks the rhetorical question, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" You can't walk in close fellowship with somebody who is diametrically opposed to your basic presuppositions and belief system. There cannot be close harmony or fellowship in such disagreement. This is why Paul says to the Corinthians,

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

There is no fellowship when two or more parties cannot be agreed. But beware, do not think because one party agrees with the other that there is harmony. You may be in agreement with what God says, but God needs to be in agreement with what you do. Jesus said, "If you love me,

keep my word.” I can be in agreement with God theologically, mentally, intellectually, but my life may not be. Therefore, the Almighty cannot be happy, or pleased, nor is He willing to walk with us when we’re opposed to His Word. We write elaborate confessions and eloquent statements of faith, but if we walk in a way that dishonors the Lord, how can God walk with us? If you profess to be saved, I ask you, are you walking with God? Do you profess to believe the Bible? Then are you practicing the Bible? Are you living by its precepts? Do you find it the guide and conscience of everything you say, think, or do?

Walking With God Includes a Prizing of God Above All Other Prizes

To walk with God must not only include an agreement with God, but also it must include a prizing of God above all other prizes. Now this is the heart of what I want to say today. If you’re going to walk with God, you have to prize God above all other prizes. I want you to look at verse six of our text, “But without faith it is impossible to please him.”

You can be religious and not please God. You can come to church and not please God. If you are to please God you must have the kind of faith that God requires. I must distinguish between the different kinds of faith that exist. It’s important, beloved, very important that we know that there are different kinds of faith. We’re living in a time of confusion when simply telling people “just believe in Jesus” is not sufficient. Today, people believe in Jesus and are on their way to death and hell because they do not know that there are different kinds of faith, one that saves and others that condemn. There’s faith that does not save, and there’s a faith that does save. And when you use the word “faith” or “believe” in today’s culture, it means something entirely different from the word “belief” or “faith” that the Bible means. We need to make delineation between a head faith and a heart faith, an intellectual faith and a saving faith, a human faith and a divine faith. In Hebrews chapter eleven and verse six, the author says without this divine and supernatural faith, which has its origin with God and is planted in your heart by God, you can’t please God, “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” What does it mean that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? It does not mean that God will give you whatever you want and ask Him for in prayer. It means something entirely different. It means that He is the reward of those that diligently seek Him. If you’re seeking Him and He rewards you, you must be rewarded with Him. He’s the prize. He’s the reward.

And so Enoch was a man that diligently pursued God for God’s sake. He wanted God. In order to be a God-pleaser, there has to be a divine (I say divine because it’s not human, it’s not natural) yearning in your soul for Jesus that just won’t let you go. The text is not talking about being saved, but rather having a pursuit of Christ. That’s why we must make these terms very clear in our confused and deluded culture. We must distinguish between being a “Christian” and being a “pursuer of Christ.” In the times in which we find ourselves living, the word “Christian” means somebody who “believes in Jesus” versus some other religion. But the biblical term “Christian” goes a good deal beyond such a superficial definition. It means one who pursues God with a wild yearning of one’s heart and prizes Him above all other prizes. In Colossians chapter one and verse ten, Paul lays out in this one verse what the whole Christian life is to be like. As Paul prays

for Christians he says, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." In other words, a pursuing of God is what Paul prays for the Colossians.

What does, "increasing in the knowledge of God" mean? Going to a Bible study and gaining more information about God? Enrolling in a Bible college and taking a course in theology? No, none of these things, for the flesh can do every one of these and the heart remain dead or cold. To "increase in the knowledge of God" is about growing in the experiential knowing of God. How do you please the Lord? "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How do you please the Lord? By pressing in closer and closer through faith. Such a pressing in on God requires a denying of the flesh that will be opposed to getting closer to God. It will mean you will have to place your body under subjection and tell your body to do things it doesn't want to do. You must not feel sorry for the flesh and give in to it.

Prizing Christ demands death to prizing anything more than Christ. Jesus put the death nail in trying to prize or serve two masters at the same time. He said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

I've been exercising and part of my exercise routine is for three days to run for twenty minutes. Yesterday while I running I discovered something about my flesh. I was running back towards the church and I had one minute left. I spied me a goal that I thought would take me a minute to reach and I ran as fast and as hard as I could down the stretch. With my stopwatch in my hand and twenty seconds left and about ten yards away I stopped because my body said, "That's it, fellow, that's as far as we're going." Here is what I learned about me and my flesh that morning: that often we give in to the body rather than having control over the body. I could have gone that extra ten yards; I just wanted to get through worse than I wanted to accomplish the goal. When you press in nearer to God to experience this growing knowledge of Christ, the flesh is going to resist you, and it's going to say "I can't, I won't, no." But you have to do what Paul said. You must get your body under subjection to the Spirit of God in you. And when it says, "You are not going to go any farther," you must say, "Yes, we're going to. Get used to it. Here we go."

Some may experience feelings of anxiety and wonder what it is going to cost them to prize Christ above all other treasures. It isn't going to cost you anything, because in the end, you'll gain a whole lot more than you'd ever give. The price is minimal compared to the dividend received. Whatever you give, you gain a whole lot more. Your life is worth the prize. Isn't His life worth more than your life?

Your time is worth the prize isn't it? I ask, isn't time spent pursuing the Pearl of Great Price worth it? Time. The thing that you don't think you have any more of. Pursuing Christ means to treasure Him above your time. It will mean time in the Word and in the closet of prayer. You don't know somebody without spending time with them. There's no other way.

Yes, there is a difference between professing that you're a Christian and having a yearning to know Christ. Those who are really saved have a yearning that eats at their soul and will not let them go. And it'll never go away. Sometimes it's stronger than others, sometimes it's very weak, but it's still there. So my question is, dear friend, is it there in your heart and life? If it is, it's there because you have faith operating in you and without faith it's impossible to please God.

Let me share with you quickly Psalms chapter sixteen verse eight. Here's how David walked with God. He said, "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." He made a conscientious effort. It takes such an effort throughout the day of establishing Christ before you. You walk with the mindset "He is before me, I am His servant, He is with me." You concentrate, you meditate, you talk to Him, you listen to Him. Dear friend, that's what it means to walk with God. And when He speaks, you do it. Very simple.

Enoch's Translation is a Type of Spiritual Translation

Let's notice again in our text, Hebrews eleven, verse five, that Enoch was translated. He was taken out of this world, not by death, but God just picked him up and moved him right on to heaven to his new address. Enoch's translation is a type of a spiritual translation. Again, Colossians chapter one and verse thirteen, Paul writes about the Christian, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." The moment I was saved, the Lord took me out of the kingdom of darkness. Satan was my master and he was cruel and ruthless in his leadership and rule. But God, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the sacrificial death and blood of Jesus, reached down into the dark pits of hell and lifted us up and He translated us from darkness into light. You don't want to go back—it's not your home—it's not your address—there's nothing there you love any more—you hate it. Your home is where Christ is. Oh, I don't know why God doesn't translate us all physically like He did Enoch. I don't know why, but it doesn't matter. I've already been translated.

Enoch Was Known as a God-Pleaser

Enoch was known as a God-pleaser. The Bible says, "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Does the workplace know that you are a pleaser of God? Mothers, do your children know that you're a God-pleaser? Sir, do your neighbors know that you please God? What a testimony to have! They may have laughed at Enoch, and scoffed at him, and rejected his preaching about righteousness, but they did say this, "That man pleases God." But how was faith born in the life of Enoch? Where did Enoch's faith come from? Well, we know it came from God, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). God revealed Himself to Enoch. This is going to be very clear in verse seven as we study Noah's faith and then later on in the life of Abraham. Man doesn't believe in God until God reveals Himself to that man. But how did Enoch's faith work itself out and make it evident to people that Enoch pleased God?

I think the question is answered by this, in that he pursued God as the greatest prize. That was what Paul did and that's what I'm wanting to do, and I hope you are too. In Philippians three and

verse seven, Paul said, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." For those of you who want to try to get technical, if you want to put a price on anything, there you go, there's your price tag. Does it mean you give up and you live as a hermit or a monk somewhere? No, it means that you simply prize Jesus more than you prize the other things. Verse eight of Philippians three, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Some want to argue with the present tense of this verse, "that I may win Christ" and say he already had Christ, he was already saved. But beloved, Paul wasn't talking about salvation here; he was talking about growing in the knowledge of Christ. He wanted to get closer to his God. He says in verse ten, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." When you want to give your life and your death to be counted worthy unto the glory of God, you have learned how to prize Him above all other prizes. It's not by mistake that this is the constant theme of my preaching. Please don't misunderstand, it's not because I cannot remember what I preach, and so I keep bringing you back to this truth. And neither is it because I don't know anything else to say. It is because all things in God's word lead to this ... The Supremacy of God in All Things. This is the jewel that crowns all jewels. This is the pinnacle of Christianity. If your feet are not on this road, then your feet have led you astray. If your quest is some other prize, then heaven is not your destination. If something else has your heart, then it is sure Christ does not possess it. This is way unto eternal life. This is the means of the greatest joy and contentment. It is Christ crowned above all and Lord of all in you.

Can you now say you walk with God and have the testimony that you please Him? If not, then cast yourself as a needy man or woman at His feet and plead for mercy. Weep that you have taken a diamond beyond price and played with it like a marble. Turn from your sins and especially your sin of devaluing the Prince of Glory, Christ Jesus. Believe on Him right now. By believing I mean treasure and trust Him to be the only one who has satisfied sin's debt owed to God and rest in His death and work on Calvary's cross. Long for Him more than a starving man craves food; more than a thirsty man seeks water. Desire Him above fame or men's applause. Cherish Him far more than wealth.

Believe in and upon Him. Faith is that which pleases God. And if you have faith you will have fellowship with the Creator of all you can and cannot see. God help me to do that. Believe in Him and upon Him, for faith is what pleases God, the kind of faith that prizes Him above all other prizes. And friends, that's how you walk with God. Amen.