

By Faith Enoch

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[0 : 00] He sends heed. Well, for the next few sermons, next couple weeks, both evening, morning and evening, we're going to be looking at Hebrews 11 together.

We're going to be considering what it means to have faith and to recognize the faith of many of these characters in the Old Testament. And so we'll be looking specifically at Hebrews 11, verses 1 through 6 today.

If we don't have it on the screen, you can turn there. But as we get started, I wonder, have any of you ever heard anyone talk about the good old days? Maybe when you were a child and you'd listen to your grandparents and hear them talk about the good old days when things were cheaper and life was simpler.

Maybe you refer to the good old days yourself. Maybe for you, that's when you were in university and you didn't have much responsibility and you could spend a lot of time with your friends. Maybe the good old days were when you were a newlywed and it was just you and your spouse.

Or maybe when you had your first child, those were the good old days. I don't know if many of you are familiar with the American version of the TV show *The Office*. That's one of my favorite shows.

[1 : 16] And on the last season of the last episode, there's a character named Andy who says something that's kind of turned into one of the more well-known quotes of the show.

He has moved on from his time at this company that he worked and he was no longer with his friends anymore, but has this loss that he senses, even though he's now at his dream job.

And he says, and when he looks into the camera, he says, I wish there was a way to know you're in the good old days before you've actually left them. And I think this is a sentiment that many of us experience.

We may feel that often. And this is actually a sentiment that's being experienced by the New Testament church here. And so this is what the author of Hebrews is really addressing because these young Christians, many of them are from a Jewish background.

And so they're experiencing this feeling of wishing for the good old days at times because they remember their heritage and their customs and their cultures.

[2 : 20] But now as they've been brought into faith in Christ, they're experiencing persecution. They're experiencing hardship. They're being abandoned by family and friends. And so many of them are tempted to turn back.

And so this is what the author of Hebrews is warning against. He's encouraging them not to turn back. But that doesn't mean not to look in the past. He's saying, yes, let's look at the past.

Let's consider how God has been faithful to his people. But let that, those thoughts and those memories propel us forward to the goodness of Christ. And so let's turn then to Hebrews 11, verses 1 through 6.

We're actually going to be skipping verse 4 and read along with me. Now, faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

[3 : 21] By faith, Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death. He could not be found because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

And without faith, it is impossible to please God. Because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

This is the word of God. Pray with me. Lord, as we come to the study of your word, we do so humbly. And as we consider our own faith, may we reflect on how you have been faithful to us.

May we be eager to hear from you this morning, we pray, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen. Now, this chapter, Hebrews 11, is often referred to as the hall of faith.

We see these giant characters from the Old Testament time. Many of these characters would have been revered in Jewish tradition. And people that would have now come into the church would recognize and know about these characters.

[4 : 30] And so as we go through these next few sermons together, we're going to be taking these characters one at a time. I'm going to be selecting one of them. And we're going to be considering their life of faith and how that applies to us.

And so today we're going to be looking at the life of Enoch. But before we do, I want to start as the author of this book does and consider exactly what faith is.

How does that impact us? How should we consider our faith? I think faith is one of the most misunderstood concepts that we have within the church.

And especially those who are outside the church. I think people usually fall into two camps. You have those people who really despise faith. And then you have those people who really admire faith.

So I want to consider both of these groups for a few minutes to consider their reasoning and maybe how their thought could be corrected.

[5 : 24] First, those who are opposed to faith. There's a famous atheist writer who's since passed away, Christopher Hitchens. And he once wrote, faith is the surrender of mind.

It's the surrender of reason. And so people that despise faith, I think this is the reason why. They think that faith is for the weak.

It's for the simple-minded. You know, secular naturalism is one of these worldviews that many within the society hold to today. And it's that idea that everything can be explained by natural means.

All that is around us is simply the natural world. There's nothing else. And so when they espouse this worldview, a few things that they're relying on is their reason and their sense perception.

And so when they consider faith, they think, well, faith is anti-reason. Faith is anti-sense perception. And therefore, it has no value. It's this old-fashioned practice that we don't need to follow anymore in our modern world.

[6 : 25] Unfortunately, I think many within the church may hold a similar belief because we see faith as something that we can compartmentalize. Something that operates outside of reason and sense perception.

But I don't think that's what the Bible teaches. I don't think that's how we should consider faith because faith is not the enemy of perception. It's not the enemy of reason. In fact, the three can actually live together in harmony.

Because we have reason and we have our senses. And on top of that, we place our faith. And it's our faith that then can lead us to a greater reality. Because if we think about it, we have the Word of God, right?

And in order to be able to open our Bibles and to read it, it takes some level of reason. It takes some level of intellect to know what the Bible says, to know who Jesus is.

But in addition to that, when we read the Bible, we see that the Bible includes a lot about perception. In 2 Peter 1.16, it says this, For we do not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

[7 : 37] So we see that the Bible includes sense perception too. And so we use our reason, we rely on these senses, and that's where our faith is placed, and then it elevates us beyond that to a greater understanding of who God is.

And so then we have to consider, well, what is our faith in? What's the object of our faith? And that's where this other camp comes into play, these people that admire faith. But a lot of times it's misguided because you must question, well, what is the basis of their faith?

A lot of times they consider faith nothing more than relying on self. It's nothing more than positive thinking. It's this notion that you just kind of look inwardly and believe in yourself.

Our kids' primary school, their motto is believe, achieve. And while that kind of sounds inspirational, you're kind of left asking, well, believe in what?

Are the kids supposed to believe in themselves? Are they okay to believe in whatever they want?

The problem is that faith oftentimes in society is reduced to nothing more than just a superstition,

where you just have to believe hard enough or think well enough, maintain this positive outlook that good things are finally going to come to you.

[8 : 57] But that's not what we see here. That's not what the author of Hebrews is talking about when he refers to faith. And so he says in verse 1, Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see.

And so the author here is making it clear that faith isn't blind. Just like our eyes allow us to see the natural world around us, faith is the organ by which we are able to see and sense the invisible spiritual world.

And so rather than faith being something that blinds us with ignorance, it's something that actually expands and enhances our faith. And so when we think about faith, we need to recognize that it's not only simply believing in God, that he exists.

Yes, that's true. But it's also believing God, that we're holding fast to God's revelation and to his character, that we know that he is good, that he is just, and that he is loving.

And so this Greek verb that's used in verse 1 for assurance, it literally means to stand under. Like if you were to possess a title deed, you were standing under that legal claim.

[10 : 11] And so it's talking about the fact that we have a legitimate claim to the hope that God has given us. And so it's not just standing on the edge and just kind of having these positive feelings out toward the universe.

Right? It's being grounded in the hope of God. It's this unshakable conviction in the work of Christ and what he has done and is continuing to do. And so that's the basic framework that I want us to think about as we consider faith over these next couple weeks.

And so then as we turn to look at Enoch here, as I said at the beginning, this isn't just kind of a recapturing of Old Testament characters just so we can kind of reminisce about them.

But we look at their faith in order that we may be encouraged in our faith, that we may be more apt to pursue Christ because of the faith of these Old Testament characters.

So as we look at the life of Enoch, I want us to consider three things this morning, three elements of faith. The first is this, faith pursues communion with God.

[11 : 20] The second is faith seeks to please God. And thirdly, faith is rewarded by God. And so let's look at that first feature of faith together, that faith pursues communion with God.

Now, we don't really know much about Enoch. There's not really much mentioned about him in the Old Testament. We know that he is six generations removed from Adam, the first man.

And so actually he would have lived at the same time as Adam. Their lives would have overlapped. And so this is what the Old Testament says about Enoch if we were to turn to Genesis chapter 5, verses 21 through 24.

It says this, And so we see a very interesting story in Enoch because he's only one of two people in the Bible.

That went into God's presence without actually experiencing death. The other one being Elijah. And we know that Elijah, there were eyewitnesses to this who saw him being taken up in this chariot of fire.

[12 : 41] Here, there's no explanation. It doesn't say that there's any eyewitnesses to how this happened for Enoch. But again, we know it's truth from here in Genesis and it's retelling in Hebrews.

But it's really something telling about the life of Enoch that I want us to focus on today. And it's what it says in that passage we just read, that he walked faithfully with God.

It says that twice in those few couple verses. And so this is actually a phrase that's used also to describe his great-grandson, Enoch's great-grandson, which would be Noah.

If you look in Genesis 6-9, it says, Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. And so I want us just to think for a second about how wonderful a description that is.

How simple yet meaningful that description is, to walk faithfully with God. I mean, is that not how we'd want our lives to be characterized? Is that not what we'd want other people to say about us, that he or she faithfully walked with God?

[13 : 46] One of the things that I really like to do for exercise is to run. And I usually run early in the morning. And since we've lived here in Edinburgh, I've had to do that by myself.

But when we lived back in South Carolina, I always had a group of guys who would run together. We'd meet at 5 in the morning. We'd run several times a week, usually 30, 40 miles in a week. And that was truly one of the things that I enjoyed most about my day. One of the things that I remember most fondly about living in Greenville is because when I ran with these guys on a nearly daily basis, we were sharing life together.

Because as we ran, we'd always be talking. We'd be talking about our families and about our jobs. We'd be talking about spiritual matters or sports or politics or whatever it is. And so because of our consistency, because of the amount of time we spent together, I knew these guys pretty much better than any of my other friends that I had back in Greenville.

And it's all because of these miles that we log together on a weekly basis. And so when we look at this picture of Enoch, it's a similar picture here that Enoch walked faithfully with God.

[14:55] And it says that he did it for 300 years. And so that's a lot of miles logged with God. But I think when we think about our faith, this is one of those elements that we can easily struggle with.

Because oftentimes, even within the church, we can reduce faith to mere knowledge. That we know the Bible. We know who Jesus is. We know the plan of salvation.

And we think that that's sufficient for our faith. Maybe we take it a step further and we kind of recognize that faith is more about intellectual assent.

That yes, I know the Bible, but I also believe it. I agree that Jesus is the Son of God. I believe that He came to earth and died on the cross and rose again. But while these two elements are good and they're necessary, faith needs to go beyond knowledge and this intellectual assent.

It says in James 2.19, You believe that there is one God. Good. Even the demons believe this and shudder. And so we need to think when we recognize what faith is that there's this third element.

[16:04] And this is what's being encouraged by the author of Hebrews here. When we talk about faith, when we talk about walking with God, it's this level of personal trust. It's this deep affection that involves our wills and that involves our heart.

It's this sincere love that we have for Christ, that we want to be near Him, that we want to embrace Him. We want to be hidden in Him. And so this is what we see the author of Hebrews repeats several times that he emphasizes in his letter is this drawing near to God.

We see it in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16. It says, Hebrews 10.22 says this, And so we see that faith is relational.

This is how God created it. This is what His original intent was to live with us. If we look back to Adam and Eve in the garden, they lived in perfect fellowship with God.

And it wasn't until sin entered the world that Adam and Eve began to push back against that relationship. We know when they ate that forbidden fruit, it says that their eyes were opened.

[17:25] And soon after, God walked in the cool of the day through the garden. And what did Adam and Eve do? They hid. And so how often do we resist our relationship with the Lord?

Yes, we're willing to confess a creed. We'll be able to profess our faith verbally. But having that relationship is often a struggle. You know, instead of spending time in the Word, maybe we're tempted to just sit on the Internet.

Scroll through Instagram. Rather than actually spend time in devoted prayer, we're content just to watch Netflix. Rather than creating this devotion, developing these patterns of devotion in our life, we get all consumed with our work or with our family or with recreation.

And the root of this resistance is really our sin. Because we know that sin has separated us from God. It's our sin that causes us to resist God, that causes us to feel uncomfortable in His presence. But we know that it says in Colossians that though we were alienated and hostile to God, that we have been reconciled to Him through the blood of Jesus. And so I think this is important to note that Jesus didn't die just so that we will give Him our intellectual assent.

[18:47] He died that we may be brought into relationship with Him, that we may be children of God. One of the last things that Jesus said to His disciples in that upper room, He said, I don't call you my servants, but I call you my friends.

And so when we look at faith, we recognize that we are welcomed into communion with God. And then that second point, faith seeks to please God.

If we look back at the second part of Hebrews 11, 15, it says this, that Enoch, he had been taken up. Before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

And without faith, it is impossible to please God. And so we see that our faith is to be pleasing to God. It's to bring Him joy and pleasure that we may desire to be in relationship with Him.

Now, if you're married or if you're in a relationship, you may remember those first few months of getting to know someone. Maybe you had this initial attraction to your spouse, and maybe you made efforts to attract them, that those feelings may be reciprocated.

[19 : 58] You may try to impress them in certain ways. I remember when I was in university, I played on the rugby team, and Rachel would come to all my rugby games.

And whenever I had occasion to score a try, you know, you kind of run back down the pitch, and you kind of glance up in the stands to see if she's looking, see how she's responding, to see if she's impressed with my feat of athleticism.

Maybe you did other things to try to impress your spouse early on. Maybe it was your intellect. Maybe it was your ability to cook or your style or whatever it may be. But I can tell you after 13 years of marriage now that Rachel could really care less about being impressed by me.

And that's no fault of her own. She doesn't care if I walk around the house trying to lift heavy things, or I tell her how far I've run or how many books I've read. That's not what's going to bring her pleasure.

What's going to bring her pleasure as her husband being in relationship together is by spending time with her, by talking with her, by caring for her.

[21 : 02] And so that's how we're going to sustain a relationship, our relationship with God, not doing things for Him, but walking with Him. That's us, and that is how our true relationship would be with Christ.

And so this truth really transformed the lives. If we look back to Martin Luther, he, as you may know if you know anything about him, when he was 21, he entered a monastery.

He thought God was calling him to be a monk. And in one of his journals, he wrote this. He said, I was a good monk and kept my rules so strictly that I could say that if ever a monk could get into heaven through monastic discipline, I was that monk.

But yet we see that as he strove to encounter God, as he strove to please God, he actually felt more distant from Him. because he recognized that his piousness wasn't bringing any sort of sense of satisfaction or security in his life.

And it wasn't until he had this light bulb moment when he was reading from Romans. Romans chapter 1, verse 17, it says this, For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last.

[22 : 19] Just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. And so he says it was at this moment that he realized that faith is the only way to please God.

It's only by our faith that we are brought into relationship with God. And he wrote it. It was at this realization that he felt that he was altogether born again and that he had entered paradise itself through open gates.

And so we see that we don't earn God's pleasure based on how we act. It's not our church attendance. It's not our religious credentials.

It's not whether you honor your mother and father. It's all based on the works of Christ. It says that all of our good works apart from our faith are like filthy rags.

And so we must have true faith if we're going to try to bring pleasure to God. But there's that kind of opposite side of the coin.

[23 : 16] If we have faith and we're not trying to please God through our actions, then we also need to recognize that we should not be attempting to please the world, to please man through our actions. Because we can't do both.

D.L. Moody said this about Enoch. He said, I believe that Enoch was the most peculiar man who lived in that day. He was a man out of fashion of the world. He did not go with the current and the crowd.

He was one of those who set his affections on things above. He lived days of heaven upon earth. For the essence of heaven is to walk with God. And so this is the kind of faith that should characterize our lives as believers.

Rather than trying to earn God's favor, rather than trying to seek man's approval, we have this desire, we should have this desire, to be in relationship with God that is pleasing to him.

And so that leads us to our third feature of faith, that our faith is rewarded by God. If we look again at Hebrews 11, 6, it says this, And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

[24 : 34] And so two simple concepts I want us to consider in this verse. The first is that anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists. This is what we talked about. This is this level of intellectual assent.

We must acknowledge that God is real. That he is a true being. Because this is the building block by which we can have that relationship with God.

That beats pretty loud, isn't he? This is the foundation by which we have this relationship with God. But secondly, the second part of this verse is what I want us to focus on for a few minutes here.

That we must believe that he rewards those who earnestly seek after him. And so just as we finish talking about our faith being pleasing to God, the author kind of turns it around and looks at it.

How does it affect us? We recognize that our faith is good for us. That we derive reward from our faith. So our faith really provides this mutual benefit for both God and us.

[25 : 37] Our faith pleases God, and it brings reward to us. I think oftentimes as a believer, we may look at our faith and maybe consider it a burden.

That it's this constant struggle. We have to be obedient. That we have to keep the faith. That we're called to persevere under hardship. That we think that maybe God is this tyrant that we have to continually appease.

But that's not what the author here is saying. He's saying the exact opposite. That our faith is for our good. And so if we look at the life of Enoch again, I mentioned that he was likely alive during the time.

He was alive during the time of Adam. We don't know if they had a relationship. But he actually was taken up to be with God only 57 years after Adam would have passed away.

And so Moody suggests that we should consider whether Enoch might have had a relationship with Adam. Maybe they spent time talking about the second Adam that God had promised.

[26 : 40] How evil would be defeated. Maybe he saw, maybe we can consider how Enoch would have seen Adam at his grave.

That the first natural man died the first natural death. But we know that Enoch didn't experience this death himself, right? That he walked with God so closely.

That one commentator, he puts it this way. He says that we should suggest, he suggests we see this picture of Enoch and God walking together. And as the day draws to an end, God says to Enoch, Well, we're closer to my house than to yours.

So why don't you just come home with me? Moody said that when Enoch was taken up, he changed his place. But he didn't change his company.

And so while we marvel at this truth about Enoch's life, again, the author of Hebrews is directing us forward. We see the life of Christ foreshadowed in the life of Enoch.

[27 : 41] Because Jesus, years, generations later, he came to earth. He lived a perfect life. He was in perfect fellowship with God. In a way that no man ever was, not even Enoch.

But instead of being taken up with Christ, taking up with God, we see that he willingly chose to suffer death. To take the punishment that he did not deserve.

In order that our sins may be forgiven. In order that we may enter into, that we can enter into relationship with God. And so we also see then that this life of Enoch not only points to the first coming of Christ, but also to his second coming.

Because like Enoch, when Christ returns at the resurrection, we will receive that same reward that Enoch does. That we may be taken up with God.

And so I don't know if many of you are familiar with the catechisms. If you're not, we use catechisms within the church to instruct Christians.

[28 : 42] They provide a summary of the principles of our faith. And so one that I thought was really appropriate for this topic was from the Westminster Catechism. It was question number 38.

And the question is this. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? This is the answer. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

This is the ultimate reward for our faith. Perfect communion with God forever. And the great thing about this, this is a free gift.

For by grace you have been saved through faith in that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not by work so that no one can boast. Earlier this week when I was putting my girls to bed, Mary Catherine was trying to play some music on her tablet for them to fall asleep to.

And she said it wasn't working. She said, my tablet's going haywire. And so I turned to Francie and I said, do you know what it means when something goes haywire? I said, I'll give you a pound if you can figure out what it means.

[29 : 58] And she said, I don't know. And then she whispered, daddy, can you tell me what it means when something goes haywire? And so I said, well, when something goes haywire, it means that it's not working correctly.

And then she pauses a second. And then with great confidence, she did exactly what I thought she was going to do. She answered my question as if she had thought of the answer herself. Daddy, when something goes haywire, it means that something's not working correctly.

Can I have my pound now? And so although I had given her the answer, she thought she was deserving of the reward. And so our relationship with the Father is not that dissimilar because it is God who calls us to himself.

It's he's the one who gives us the desire and the ability to believe. He is the object of our faith and he is the one who sustains our faith. It is the work of Christ and his action.

And by it, we reap the benefit. And so if you're not a believer, recognize that this gift of faith is being offered to you freely.

[31 : 00] And it is only through faith that we can be brought into relationship with the God who created you and the God who loves you. And if you are a believer, I pray that you're encouraged in your faith.

That you may be inspired to walk with God. To live a life that's marked by deep, meaningful, sincere trust.

That you may have faith that is pleasing to God and that ultimately brings you reward. Pray with me. Lord, we thank you that you are faithful to us.

Thank you for the story of Enoch. That we can understand better what it means to live a life of faith. And so God, we desire to walk closely with you.

Lord, for those of us who are far off, who feel distant from you, we pray that by your spirit you give us the ability and the desire to have faith. That we may be brought close.

[32 : 09] That we may be called children of God. This we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Now we're going to listen to our last song together.

Do we have it there? What a friend we have in Jesus. Good. Thank you. What a friend we have in Jesus.

All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry.

Everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry. Everything to God in prayer.

[33 : 17] Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful? Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Are we weak and heavy laden?

Cumbered with load of care. Precious Savior, still our refuge.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.

[34 : 26] In his arms he'll take and shield you. You will find a solace there.

Amen. Amen. With me to receive our benediction, taken from 1 Thessalonians 5.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful. And he will do it. Amen. Go in peace. God bless you.

Give me another breath. Say this to this study. Okay. Thank you.