

The presence of hope during the reign of death

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Father, that you are sovereign right now, that you hear our prayers, that you long for us to call out to you for rest and relief. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as we read your word. Feed us with your word. And this we ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

Please be seated. So just so you know, you should get your Bibles out. We're going to look at Genesis 5, which is one of the most boring parts of the Bible. And for Canadians, I don't know, at least I think for Canadians in 2017, it's one of the most boring parts of the Bible. And I include myself in that. I can tell you that when I read genealogies like Genesis 5, my eye moves down the page. Nothing goes from the page to my head most of the time. And in fact, I often, when I read a genealogy, and I wanted to read a chapter of the Bible, I often actually read the next chapter as well, because I feel I haven't read a chapter of the Bible if I just read a genealogy, because nothing's stuck. So I'm just going to move out of the light for a second, just out of curiosity.

There we go. I'm out of the light. How many people here, out of curiosity, can remember two of their great-grandparents' first and last names? Raise your hand. If you can remember two of your great-great-grandparents' first... Okay, that's more than I thought, but a very tiny minority. How many people can remember the first and last name of two great-great-grandparents?

I don't think anybody's put their hand up. If you do know, you should whoop and holler or something like that. Okay, so we don't tend to know very much about our ancestors, which is what I've just sort of established. And by the way, I couldn't name two of my great-grandparents.

All I know is that some of them had Sinclair as the last name. That's why I asked for first and last name, because some of you could have all said Sinclair or whatever. You wouldn't say Sinclair unless you're a guest and your last name's Sinclair. You should introduce yourself after the service. So here we're reading a genealogy, and we have a hard time because we don't really find it that interesting or if we find it interesting... In fact, I would bet if I asked how many people could name two players on the Senators, probably everybody would put their hands up, right? Many people, if not all of you in the room, would put your hands up. So we're far more interested in sports than genealogies, and why on earth does God put genealogies in the Bible?

[2 : 31] Well, part of the reason he puts them in the Bible is because he didn't write the Bible just for us. Some people like genealogies. But the other thing is, everything in the Bible, 2 Timothy says, everything in the Bible is profitable for teaching. And this genealogy, as I'm going to show you, it's actually very, very interesting. It has some very powerful things to teach us. So you hope you got your Bibles open. Genesis chapter 5. And what we're going to do is I'm going to start reading, not at verse 1, but I'm going to start reading at verse 8 with this light, actually. It's hard for me to read the verse numbers. Verse 8. Is it 8? 6. Verse 6. And here's how it goes in verse 6, okay? Stay with me.

When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. Seth lived, after he fathered Enosh, 807 years, and had other sons and daughters. I can already hear some people snoring. Thus, all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died. When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. Enosh lived, after he fathered Kenan, 815 years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus, all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died. Okay, so what you get here is in this particular genealogy, one of the things which is really interesting about it, is that there's a very clear rhythm. There's going to be 10 names which are given, and just as a bit of a timeout, last week I said that I was going to deal with some of the problems with the Bible this week. I'm not going to do it this week. I'm going to do it when I preach in Genesis next. Like, are these all literal years? Who did Cain marry? Who was Cain afraid that was going to kill him? Some of those questions that some of you have, I'm not going to deal with it today. I will deal with it, though, I promise you. So let's just sit with this. You can know that I am going to deal with it in a week ahead or so, a couple of weeks ahead. But here's the thing.

You have this rhythm. It always gives you the name. It always says how long they lived. It always says they fathered somebody. It tells you their name, how many years they lived after, the fact that they had other sons and daughters, and then it gads up the total, and then it says he died. But here's the thing which is very important about this. If you go back and you read it, here's what happens for the first six names. And he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died.

And then it comes to the seventh name, and you expect, and he died, and he doesn't die. And then you go to the eighth name and the ninth name, and it goes back to, and he died, and he died. Nine times, eight times out of the ten, the last one is Noah. It's going to now, it's introducing the story of Noah. That's why it doesn't end with Noah dying. Noah will die in chapter nine. But it's his rhythm all the time. And he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died. [5 : 30] Doesn't die. And he died, and he died. It's a very, very powerful rhythm. If you had somebody really good at reading, and you get caught up in it, there's this regular pattern. At the very heart of the pattern are these three words, and he died. So if you could put up the first point, this is something which is, which the text is setting up in a very, very subtle way, okay? Subtle, but for some cultures who love things like this, and love rhythmic things, you could actually see some, anyway, it's communicating by this refrain, this very important truth. Adam, because this is now chapter five, right? And so in Genesis chapter one, in Genesis chapter two, it's established that God makes all things. He makes everything perfect. He makes everything good. There's no evil. There's no sin. Well, we live in a world where there's evil and sin. Where does that come from? Well, it doesn't come from God. That's part of the good news, is that evil is not something that God creates, and he's always opposed to it. And we see that Adam and Eve directly rebel against God. They want to be God, like God. They want to be God themselves. And so to show that they want to be God, they completely and utterly disobey God, and then they lie about it afterwards, et cetera, et cetera. So what we see happening in the story is that Adam sought to begin the reign of humans. The age of God has come to an end.

The age of humans has begun. Sort of indirectly playing with the words from Lord of the Rings. But what he actually did is launch the reign of death. Aren't you really glad you came to church this morning to be told that?

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we all just go home, completely and utterly depressed. No. You know, this is very, very, very realistic, isn't it? It seems as if in our world, death reigns.

Like just, you know, some of you here, this is actually a whole, this whole chapter is a chapter about hope, by the way, which is why I think I named the sermon, if I remember correctly, I named it the presence of hope during the reign of death. That's what the name of the sermon is, the presence of hope during the reign of death. But the text establishes very clearly here that Adam sins, death comes as a result of sin, and now death reigns. So where is hope? Like, is that all the final word that there is? You know, we live for a while, and then we die. And when we die, that's it. We're just dead.

And people who really understand that actually have a hard time not knowing why despair isn't the most honest way to live. But I'm not going to talk about that, because here's the thing.

[8 : 34] Fundamentally, we human beings believe in hope. I mean, we might struggle with it. We might have times when we experience no hope whatsoever, but we all have this deep sense that on one hand, it seems as if death reigns, but we should have hope somehow, that even though we might listen to certain philosophers and all that, and they might convince us that there is, ultimately we just die and all of that, but we have this fundamental sense that hope isn't vain, that there should be, even if hope isn't true, it should be true.

Like, we don't have people saying hope is just so automatically true. It should be despair. There should be no hope. No. There's something about human beings that cry out for the fact that surely, even if we can't understand how it could be grounded, but there should be hope.

There's something in human beings about that. And this text, in a very, very subtle but powerful ways, tries to establish it. And what it does, how you see it, is when the rhythm is broken. So, you know, if you go back and you read verse 6, and you read all the other things, actually, if you go back to verse 1, you'll see it as well, but I'm going to get to that in a moment.

You'll see that there's this rhythm. Ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. But three times in the 10, the rhythm's broken.

And the rhythm's broken to catch our attention. Most of you are like me, and you get bored easily about things that don't immediately please you, and so we don't notice it. But if you're a careful reader, three times the rhythm's broken. So that means that God wants to catch our attention. [10:24] The first time the rhythm's broken, it's a bit harder to know. It would only be if you read all the way through it and you realize, one moment, the very first one doesn't have the rhythm. So look at the first few verses of chapter 5. It says, this is the book of the generations of Adam.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female, he created them, and he blessed them and named them man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, there's a bit of an introduction, but then also the rhythm is broken. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth. There's a break in the rhythm there. So here's the, if you could put up the next point. Even though death reigns, yeah, there we go. Even though death reigns, there is hope. Human beings are still made in the image of God.

Human beings are still made in the image of God. Now, how is this hopeful? It's actually profoundly hopeful. One of the things that the Bible does here is, if you go back and read Genesis chapter 1, you'll see that being made in the image and likeness of God, and in the original language, it's just, they're a good writer. He wants to give you the, basically the same idea, but he can't say in the image, an image of God. That would just be, he puts image and likeness, but they're just two ways of saying the same idea. And you see it here in these first few verses as well. And some of us might easily say, in fact, you know, there's different philosophies or at least government ideologies that can sometimes talk about this. And you could wonder if Adam and Eve have rebelled against God and sin has now come into the world and death has come into the world, well, they obviously are still made in God's image, but maybe their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren aren't. Maybe the image of God runs out, runs dry. And what the text is saying right here is that it's reminding us, just remember, Adam and Eve are made in God's image and likeness.

And by the way, when they had a baby, Seth, well, he's in the image and likeness of Adam, who's in the image and likeness of God. In other words, the image and likeness of God continues in human beings. It's bent, it's marred, but it continues. God doesn't take it out and make us into something non-human. And in fact, the only other place in the book of Genesis where it talks about this is after the flood in Genesis 9. Because God wants us to understand, because we might even say, well, after the flood and after all flesh is destroyed, well, maybe the image of God is no, no. The Bible wants it not only in the original creation, which is good, but before the flood and after the flood, human beings are still made in the image and likeness of God. And just one other time out, this is a profoundly important Christian idea, which we should hold tightly to and meditate upon. that human beings are made in the image of God is the profound refutation of all racism and prejudice. It is the profound refutation of castes. It is the profound refutation of slavery. It is the profound refutation of any powerful person who wants to treat other human beings as subhuman. It is the profound refutation of any culture that treats women like chattel. It is the profound refutation of all government power that they can do anything they want to human beings because governments matter and people don't. It is a profound refutation of any economic system which says that the system matters or the corporation matters or the church matters or the powerful matter and people don't. It is the profound refutation of abortion.

[14:28] It is the profound grounding of human dignity and human rights. It is a powerful idea and it gives us hope during the reign of death.

It gives us hope during the reign of death. Now, the text also does something very interesting at the end as well in terms of the rhythm is also broken at the very end.

And it's done it in a very, very subtle and interesting way. Look at the very end, which begins at verse 28. When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.

Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus, all the days of Lamech were 777 years and he died. Now, you can just see that the pause and the rhythm, the break in the rhythm there is about the name of Noah and what Noah is going to do.

And there's all sorts of very interesting things about that. But the first thing is this. Those of you who were here last week might remember that there was another line, a genealogy that goes on in

chapter 4 of Genesis.

[16:01] And in chapter 4 of Genesis, just before this, there's, you know, God makes Cain and Abel. Cain murders his brother, Abel.

And then there's a genealogy of those who come in the line of the one who's murdered Cain. And if you look, the last name on that genealogy, his name is Lamech.

And so there's a profound contrast shown here. The Lamech in chapter 4 is the one who says he's the one who brings about polygamy. And he's the one who, because a young lad has hurt him, Lamech murders him.

And in response to Lamech's response to murdering a young lad isn't to say, I'm really sorry. I feel terrible. I feel guilt trodden.

What is his response? Lamech pounds his chest and say, God just promised judgment seven times if somebody hurt Cain. I'm way more powerful, way more scary than God.

[17:08] Seventy-seven times. I will wreak vengeance on you. You hurt me. I'll kill you 77 times. I'll kill 77 of your family. Fear me not, God.

Now we see Lamech, the same name, in a different genealogy. It's the genealogy, by the way, that is God showing that in Genesis chapter 3.15, he's promised that he's going to send a person who will slay the serpent and slay sin and slay death.

And it's the line to show that God is keeping his promise, that he remembers this, that he's going to still send the deliverer. And in that line, we have another man named Lamech.

But rather than boasting in how he's far more scary than God, he's the one who says, we need rest and relief. That it's valid to call out to God and to hope and trust that during the reign of death, that God will grant us rest, that God will grant us relief.

Call out to God for rest and relief during the reign of death. Can you put up the point, please?

Here's the point. Even though death reigns, there is hope.

[18:32] God wants us to call out to him for rest and relief. Even though death reigns, there is hope. God wants us to call out to him for rest and relief. You see, this is saying it a very, very subtle way for all human beings.

All human beings are made in the image of God. There's some hope. Death might do all sorts of things, but it doesn't make us less human. And that, in fact, when human beings call out in hope, and we might call out, I don't know, we might call out to the government.

We might call out to our mom. We might call out to our imaginations. We might call out to literature, to music. But when we call out for rest and relief during the reign of death, in a sense, we don't have the right address.

And it might be connected with idolatry. And it might be connected with pride and with sin. But we have this fundamental sense that it's right to call out for rest and for relief during the reign of death. And the Bible here is saying this is true. You know, if God doesn't exist, we are idiots. And if God doesn't exist, it is completely and utterly unrealistic and a flight from realism to pray.

[19:43] But if God exists, and if he is not shut out of his creation, the realistic person is the one who prays.

The one living in the real world is the one who prays. And the Bible here is encouraging us to call out for rest and relief. Now, some of you might have noticed what Ross read earlier.

And it's this very, very odd story about Enoch not dying. Remember I said, how does the rhythm go? Here's the third thing in the whole thing. Excuse me. Where the rhythm is broken, right? He died.

He died. He died. He died. He died. He died. He doesn't die. Let's look at that. It's beginning at verse 21.

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Now, it's one of the interesting things. Some of you, if you're familiar with your Bibles, know that Methuselah is listed as the oldest man who ever lived.

[20:51] And it's very, very interesting. He's fathered by the man who doesn't die. In fact, you know, one of the interesting things before we go anything further about it, if you go back, I could go on and on about the subtle things that this text teaches if you actually meditate upon it.

The person who lives the shortest is the person who doesn't die. See, what the text is trying to say is that, just like Amy Lettus in her singing, being in the presence of God is more precious than human life.

See, we'd want to have it that after Methuselah, we live a long life, and then like a reward, we don't die. But the text is trying to get at our human pride by showing that the shortest-lived person on the list is the one who walks with God.

So go back to reading it, verse 21. 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.

That's all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. You only know this if you do some commentary work, and they know ancient Hebrew.

[22 : 13] But walked with God, in verse 22, in the original language, is very unique. It's only used a couple of times in the entire Bible. Here, of Enoch, and in Malachi.

And it's a phrase in the original language which talks about particular intimacy. You see, where there's intimacy with the true and living God, there's hope.

That's what the text is trying to communicate with us. But here's the question for us. Like, why aren't we called Enochians? I'm not being corny, maybe a bit corny.

Why aren't we called Enochians? Like, why are we called Christians? Like, isn't Enoch greater than Jesus? Jesus only lived, I think he was about 35, 36, 37.

Scholars can differ. There's the different hints in the New Testament about how old Jesus actually was when he died. But let's say he was in his mid-30s. He only lived till his mid-30s. Enoch lived 365 years, and 300 of them, he said, as walking with God.

[23 : 18] And what's more, for those of you who are parents, and we know how our kids can drive us crazy, he walked with God for 300 years with kids. That's quite an accomplishment.

Later on, we can have kids talking about how their parents drive them crazy, but that's a separate thing, right? So, why aren't we Enochians rather than Christians? I'm going to give you very briefly four reasons.

The first one, if you could put it up. God stymied death for Enoch. Jesus Christ defeated death. Enoch, God stymied death for Enoch.

Jesus Christ defeated death. You know, it's the difference between, in an old fantasy story, that there's a dragon guarding the treasure, and has some people, prisoners, in the castle, and somebody is helped by somebody else to escape from the castle, but the dragon still lives.

That's very different than someone who goes and kills the dragon. My wife and I were watching something, an English movie for a bit last night, and one of the things I've noticed, a lot of English movies about kids, there's always bullying, and I don't know if it's just, I don't know what that means.

[24 : 38] A lot of American movies, it doesn't seem as if many American movies have bullying amongst kids as English ones. I have no idea what that means. It's just a bit of an observation. Maybe I'm completely sociologically not right.

It's a very different thing for a kid who's troubled by a group of bullies, that he sneaks out so the bullies don't find him, than being able to face the bully and beat the bully.

God stymied death for Enoch. Jesus Christ defeated death. Next reason. God stymied death for Enoch. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection dealt with your sin and mine.

These are all very, very important things to grasp, right? So you see, and we're going to get to in a moment why it is that this is still an important text, even for those at the time who read it that didn't understand that, and since this text is setting up for us, that the seed will be a true and greater Enoch.

A true and greater Enoch. Not just one who God stymies death on their behalf, but someone who's going to do something far more true, and I mean, this is true, but true in a far more deeper psychological and emotional and hope sense, and far more powerful, and far more effective.

[26 : 01] But God stymied death for Enoch, but Jesus Christ's death and resurrection dealt with your sin and mine. And as we see in the story from here on in, is that death is not primarily a biological reality, although it is a real biological reality.

Death is a result of sin. And so when sin is dealt with, the penalty is paid. The perfect life of obedience, which we could not manage, is accomplished.

That's a far more important and powerful thing. Next point as to why we're called Christians, not Enochians. Only Enoch benefited from his deliverance. Only Enoch did.

His son died. In fact, the judgment's going to come upon the whole earth during the time of Noah. Only Enoch benefited from his deliverance.

The benefits of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were always meant to be given to all who asked with humble faith. In other words, it's a design feature. God designed and organized the coming of Jesus.

[27 : 11] The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit work together so that Jesus' sinless life, tempted like we are, but sinless life in his death upon the cross, that he's not dying for his own sin, his own rebellion.

He dies for you and he dies for me. It was always intended that it's not that Jesus benefits. Jesus doesn't, in a sense, at all benefit from what he does.

He empties himself. He experiences separation from the Father. He tastes all there is to taste of death and hell. He bears your rebellion, your sin, your shame, and mine.

He bears it on himself. His death and resurrection was designed to benefit you and me. Fourth point.

And the fourth point is that, Enoch's deliverance gave a glimmer of hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's vindication of the person and work of Jesus as humanity's true hope.

[28 : 18] See, it's very, very clear in here, in the story, that God wants to give people hope. He died. He died. He died. He died. He died.

He died. He doesn't die. He died. He died. It's God's saying to the human race that death might appear to reign, but God is still sovereign. Call out to Him for rest and relief.

Rest and relief will come. At the right time, God sends His Son. And Jesus, when He dies upon the cross, nobody believes He's going to rise from the dead.

Everybody believes He's going to stay dead. Everybody believes it is the end. He's predicted He will rise again from the dead. Nobody believes Him. And when He is resurrected, and that is established by multiple witnesses in many times, it is the vindication of Jesus' words.

It is the vindication of Genesis 5. When God says, you are right to hope. You are right to hope.

[29 : 29] You are made to hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's vindication of the person and work of Jesus as humanity's true hope.

Which is why, if you could put up the next point, why is it that Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

See, what is the gospel? The gospel is a message. It is a proclamation. What is it? It is a proclamation that God showed that death's reign is not final and all-encompassing in the life of Enoch, but that he said, pray and call out to him for hope and relief.

And God has done that because hope has come. True, real hope in history and beyond history has come.

He has sent his son. And his son dies not for himself, but for you and me. And he dies to deal with that which keeps us not right with God, to make us right with God.

[30 : 36] And he's vindicated in his resurrection and all who call out to him. That is the message. Call out to him. Will not be turned away. Jesus says, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden.

I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Can you put up the final slide, please, Andrew? Here's a prayer. Which I'm inviting you to pray. I mean, some of us, listen, I have times when I am not, I have times when I really struggle with anxiety.

I have times when I really do struggle with anxiety. And I'm sure I'm not the only one here. In fact, maybe some of you are very anxious. Maybe some of you right now, you're trying to figure out how you're going to pay CRA the money you owe them.

Or you've got a cancer diagnosis, or some other bad diagnosis or a loved one has. And there's lots of things in life that rob us of hope. And that's, you know, this text is saying that we are to call out to our Father in heaven.

[31 : 51] And we're to ask him to pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. And we ask him to make us a disciple of Jesus, one who follows Jesus, who knows that it's not just that you go through your day by yourself, but you go through your day with Jesus.

You go through your day not alone, but with Jesus. And as you go through your day not alone, but with Jesus, remembering what he did for you on the cross and his mighty resurrection, that we pray that that will grip us.

That will be the lens by which we understand who we are. It will be the lens by which we see and understand the power of governments and the power of culture. It will be the lens by which we understand how to deal with our neighbors and how to pray.

It's the ground that we stand on. It's the story and the truth that starts to shape our lives and to nudge us for acts of sacrifice and acts of hope and acts of courage and acts of heroism that draws us into acts of courage and acts of heroism and acts of generosity and acts of trust.

That we ask the Father to pour out his Holy Spirit upon us to help us to know that we walk with Jesus who is our Lord and is our Savior and that we're gripped and shaped by that story and that we ask him to help us to live each day with hope as we learn to live for his glory.

[33 : 29] I invite you to stand and I invite you to pray this prayer with me. If you're curious, this will all be on the webpage, I don't know, tomorrow or Tuesday if it's a prayer that's specifically helpful to you.

Let us pray. Please join with me. Father in heaven, please pour out the Holy Spirit upon me and make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel, living with hope as I live for your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Make us a prayerful church. Make us a church that reads your word and trust your word.

Make us a church, Father, that receives the gospel and is shaped by the gospel and shares the gospel. Make us a church, Father, that loves this city.

And we're not afraid of the city. We're not shaped and molded by the city, but we love the city. And we have not only, Father, a love for this city, but we have a love for the world, for all of the people groups of this world.

[34 : 39] Father, make us such a church. Make us such a people. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.