

Faith That Pleases God

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to turn again this evening for a short while to Genesis chapter 5 and we're going to look again at verse 21 page number 5 and Genesis chapter 5 and verse 21 when Enoch had lived for 65 years he fathered Methuselah Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah for 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 I remember when I was a young boy hearing this riddle being put to me by a minister and the riddle was this the oldest man in the world died before his father and it took me a wee while to work out what that meant well the oldest man in the world of course was Methuselah and he was the son of Enoch

Methuselah lived for 969 years and yet he died before his father because his father didn't die now for us the thought of living beyond the age of 900 years is quite unbelievable even today the oldest people in the world if you believe the records and we're not entirely sure what records are correct they say that the oldest person in the world at the moment is a woman called Antisa Vicheva she lives in Georgia she's 130 but even then that record is being disputed but if you even even even if that was true it doesn't even come anywhere close to the 900 or so or the 800 or the 700 years which these men and women presumably lived to towards the beginning of the human race and in that chapter of descendants every single person that is named they live way way beyond our life expectancy that's because of course we find it strange because we think we were we're doing well if you live beyond the age of 80 and you are Bible tells us that the days of our lives are three score and 10 which is 70 and if by reason of strength they're more than that then we're doing well but nevertheless scientifically they tell me that nobody understands quite why we age there's no apparently no scientific reason it's not properly understood so that means that it's conceivably possible to live much much longer technically and it's interesting that whilst that is the case the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that our days are numbered our days are limited to 70 or 80 or whatever there's one or two exceptions to that and even if that is the case we know that in a uncertain world there's no guarantee that we're even going to reach that level of age many as a person has died long before they were they reached the age of 70 or 80 and that's why the Bible tells us and warns us again and again to make sure that whatever age we die at that we're ready to die and the only way that we can be ready to die is making sure that we do not die in our sins the only way we can do that is by coming to Jesus and asking him to forgive us and to change our hearts and our lives to open up our hearts and to bring him into relationship to bring us into a relationship with himself and he says ask and you shall be received knock and the door will be open to you seek and you will find

Jesus promises that those who come to him he will in no wise cast out he will never turn away so that means that tonight you can come to him and your need and your sin and your guilt and you can know that Jesus will will forgive you and make you ready bring you to be ready for death very often you know ministers say that and then we're struck with a thought well it's not just for the sake of being ready for death that you advise somebody to become a Christian you don't become a Christian just so that you're ready for death you become a Christian because it's the truth because Christ is the truth and because Christ can remove your sin and give you a life even in this world and the kind of living that Jesus gives us in this world when we come to him by faith is a life that he calls abundant so the quality of life that he gives us here in this place is a different quality altogether to the quality that you live at the moment so it's not just as a sort of sort of a an insurance policy to make sure that when you die but meanwhile you're going to live as long as you possibly can and take advantage of your days that's not the way it is at all the fact is to give to come to the Lord now and you can change your living now and give you the kind of living that you have never known before and yet even those men who are listed here in this chapter all of these men who lived to 700

and so and 800 and so I don't know if you notice that in every single case their lives end with the same words and he died Kenan verse 12 lived for 70 years and so on and he died Mahalalel lived for 65 years went on to live for 895 and he died and it's like the the writer is deliberately ending each of the account of the lives of these men with the same words you would think that there'd be no reason to do that there's obviously he's deliberately doing that and I believe he is doing that in order to drive home the point that here is God's promise to Adam and Eve now being fulfilled when God said to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because he said if the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die and that's exactly what happened not only Adam but his the generations after him every single one of them though they lived to an enormous number of years every single one of them died it is appointed unto man wants to die Paul tells us that it was because of sin that death entered into the world and it came on all men all men and women will die because of the sin that Adam brought into the world and so it's a salutary warning here it's a very solemn chapter this by the way it's a very very solemn chapter you think of for example I'm just going to look at one

Mahalalel I don't know I don't know anything about him in fact by this verse 15 we don't know anything about him his life is summarized in three verses three verses I never counted the words you can count them within minutes Mahalalel lived for 65 years he fathered Jared Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared for 830 years and had other sons and daughters thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years and he died now you think of what it must be like to live for 895 years that's almost a millennium and yet those 855 years are condensed into three that's our that's our lives that's all we are it's like a vapor Bible tells us a vapor that's here today and it's disappeared tomorrow even eight 900 years later that's it and in a way you know to us it's an enormous amount of time isn't it and yet in God's eyes as far as God's perspective is concerned it's nothing it's just a moment a thousand years are like a day to God and a day is like a thousand years it's a moment and he died you know we think so much of ourselves don't we perhaps when we're younger you know you're looking forward to what you're going to achieve and what you want to do and all the rest of you think you've got your life ahead of you and you never think of your life being over and yet now it's when you when you get to middle age where I am tonight and then you get to older you suddenly suddenly realize that I am now the older generation and it's just appeared like that without warning and in my life is a thing of the past this is like a vapor that's come all the events and the days and the the birthdays and the celebrations and the the the highlights and all of the difficulties and everything else they're all now gone they're all in the past and that's that is what the Bible tells us and to keep things in perspective tells us there are days are like and so in the Psalm 90 tells us to count our days to make sure that we count our days to hold every day as being precious it's a gift from God it's an opportunity from God don't ever assume that one day will be like the day you don't know what's going to happen to you you don't know how your life is going to turn hold every make the most of every day that you have in this world and make sure that you give every day and commit every day to the Lord make sure you remember that the Lord is the God of every day that you live because every day is precious but yet at the end of the day even 900 years later that's it three verses just a dozen words that's it this man we don't even know anything about this and he was a real man who lived an awful long time he had a wife at least one wife he had a family he no doubt worked hard all his life and he there was many things surrounding his life and yet that's it we don't know three verses and it's finished that's a very very solemn chapter very very solemn chapter and I would I would that's why it's perhaps I should have read all of it to drive that point home but there wasn't time however there is one exception to this chapter all of these men died except one and that is you know he was one of two men in the Bible who never died who didn't die at the end of their earthly life of course you know who the other one was it was Elijah the prophet God took him and he took him to heaven in a chariot of fire some suggest that the same is true for Moses but the problem with that is that the Bible tells us that Moses died and God buried him and the dispute arises over a very strange verse in

then the letter to Jude the letter of Jude and it's a where he talks about the dispute between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses now that's a very mysterious and a very intriguing verse but I don't think we can conclude from that that Moses was taken up to heaven the same way as Elijah and Enoch was not a lot is known about Enoch's life we don't know anything about him apart from the fact that he was taken to be with the Lord and the fact that he had the a personal relationship with God in which we read that he walked with God that's the summary of his life and that's what singles him out in this whole chapter singles him out now I don't know anything about the men who

had gone before or came after we know we know about Noah that he was a good man he served God and obeyed him and loved him we don't know much about uh the the the ones who went before but Enoch was particularly noted for his personal relationship with the Lord he walked with God and that's again that's it that's it but in all of these 365 years that's the best thing that could ever be said about him and however long we live in this world that's the best thing that could ever be said about us either you know you think of the great achievers in this world you think of the celebrities the people who are instantly recognized on our televisions and newspapers today for what they've done and who they are the person who people look people who look up to the looked up to by the world and yet it's worth nothing if we don't have that relationship with God and if we don't know the Lord as our own Savior and as our own

[13 : 39] Lord that's the one thing that we know about Enoch no we know one one other thing as well and that is found in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5 and the other thing we know is that he pleased God that doesn't mean to say that he was the only person in the world to please God for example you go back to Abel Adam's son it's quite clear that Abel pleased God so if you read on through the Bible Moses you get David you get Isaiah you get Jeremiah and all of those hundreds thousands of people who in whom God is pleased and they all died so so where is the suggestion here is not that God only takes to heaven directly those who please him it's not as if I'll say that again he's not saying that the that that Enoch and Elijah are the only people who walk the face of the earth who pleased God but for some reason unknown to us God chose in his pleasure and in his sovereignty to remove Enoch and Elijah without them having to experience the normal human experience of death we do not know why he did it but they were not to conclude that they were the only two men who walked with God neither are we to conclude that they are the only two men who pleased God now it's interesting because the world at that time was now degenerating if you read into the next chapter as we did you will see that things were going from bad to worse in the world and yet this was the world in which Enoch pleased God it was a world in which God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continuously and the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart that's the kind of world in which Enoch lived so we can't say oh well it was easy for him to be a Christian it was easy because everybody was following the Lord and there were no temptations and everybody was was worshipping and doing as they that wasn't the case at all the world was going from bad to worse and yet despite that Enoch and later on Noah they lived they were prepared to be different they were prepared to stand out in a world of darkness even if that meant ridicule and pain and suffering in order to serve the Lord because they came to know the fact that to serve the Lord is the reason that we are here in this world and to enjoy him forever and so please don't say tonight it's hard to be a Christian I know it's hard to be a Christian it's always harder to be a

Christian in a world where you're the minority and where you might be in situations where you're only the one person that is a Christian in your place of work or in your family or in your community or whatever and it's always it's always easy to look back at another time or another era in history and say oh well I wish I lived then but God has placed you in this world and God has placed you to be a witness to him in this world just as Enoch one who knows how much faster the world would have degenerated if it hadn't been for Enoch who knows how much worse the world might have been if it hadn't been for someone like Enoch and who knows how many people were effectively influenced by Enoch's faithfulness and his love for the Lord even if it meant he probably didn't realize himself how much influence he was having and how God was using him in this world just by way of his normal everyday life it was hard for him to be a worshiper of God in such a world just as it is hard for us to be obedient to God in the kind of world we we live in and yet that's where God wants us to be and we don't know how our influence will be used by God in some way now the question I want to ask in the next 10 minutes is this how is it possible to please God that's what we read about Enoch that he pleased God how is it possible because this is written for him not just so that we will have a description of his life but so that we too might have an indication of what it means to please God am I pleasing to God tonight that's the question when I compare my own life with with Enoch I don't know anything about him but do I know enough to be able to ask myself the question without fear of impudence what right do I have to ask myself do I please God tonight well on one level it's one of the most awkward and searching questions that I could possibly ask of myself do I please God tonight on the other hand is there a more important question that we could

ask ourselves tonight do we please God because surely to live to please God is it connects us with our creator and with our Lord and surely that must be the highest possible goal and objective that anyone could possibly have to live to please God and that includes those who perhaps haven't up until now lived to please God is it possible for a change to take place in my life so that from now on I do live to please God can God do anything in my life so that I begin to please him and how can I know that I please God or do I care perhaps there are some of you tonight and you couldn't care less whether you please God or not couldn't care less what God thinks of you your aim and your purpose is to just do your best in this world or to get through life and to enjoy life as you and to keep God out of the picture but one day you will have to meet with him the Bible tells us that that whatever we are in this world one day we will come to God at the end of the world that we will all appear before his judgment cease so how is it possible for anyone to please God well let's see first of all if we have any clues in the Old Testament itself well the first clue we have is in Genesis chapter 4 the chapter before that where Cain and Abel brought offerings before God now we don't know who taught them to worship God by way of sacrifice and offering we can only assume that it was God

who taught them to do that we read that Cain who was a farmer he brought the fruit of the ground must have been like vegetables or grain or wheat or something like that but Abel brought who was a shepherd he brought a living thing he brought an animal he brought the very best of his flock then once the two brothers had offered their offering we read that their offerings became separated here's how the Lord had regard for Abel's offering in other words he accepted Abel's offering with pleasure and did not have regard for Cain's offering so right away even although these two men are in the same family and they both appear to be doing the same thing one of them is effective and the other one isn't God is taking pleasure in one and he is refusing the other so the first time we read about God taking pleasure in someone is he takes pleasure in Abel and and is to do with the offering that he makes now later on the Bible we read why Hebrews 11 tells us that it was by faith that Abel's offering was accepted to the Lord by faith so here we have the key to what it means to please God the key word is faith which means why was it that God rejected Cain's offer because he was coming in his by his own efforts he thought that he could work his own way and earn God's favor by what he did on the outside and as long as he ticked all the boxes and made all the right moves then God was sure to accept him but he didn't he was rejected because his worship was only from the outside his love for the Lord wasn't a deep inward love at all it wasn't a love that arose out of faith but Abel was completely different the reason that God accepted Abel's offering because God saw into Abel's heart and he knew that what he was doing on the outside he was doing from the inside as well out of a heart that was yearning for God and out of love for God and God took pleasure in his offering by faith Abel brought that offering that was accepted by God so faith is the key so let's put that to one side then faith is the key to pleasing God but faith in what what does faith mean and how can faith in my life make sure that I live a life that pleases God well let's go into the New Testament and let's get let's come to the next great marker the next great indicator or the next great clue as to what God is pleased with I want you to go to to the River Jordan in Luke chapter 3 where Jesus who has he was just about to begin his ministry on this earth and where John the Baptist is about to baptize him and where the spirit the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove and rests upon him and a voice is heard by by Jesus and his disciples and this is what the voice says this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased now whose voice was that well we know it was the voice of God God the Father speaking about his son

Jesus Christ who had been born into this world who had descended God himself had descended into this world in the womb of the Virgin Mary had been born and he had grown up in Nazareth and he was now about to fulfill he was beginning to his ministry amongst people in the towns and the villages around Judea and here was the way in which it began with an announcement from God this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased therefore if you're asking tonight what is God pleased with who is God pleased with you start there you actually don't start with Abel or you don't start with Adam or you don't start with Moses you start with Jesus Jesus here is a definitive statement here is my son says God in whom I am well pleased and that means that tonight we know that the starting point has to be Jesus Christ God tonight has always been ultimately perfectly eternally pleased and when God by the way when the Bible talks about the pleasure of

God first of all it's hard to it's hard for us to to think about the God as being pleased isn't it that's because very often the things that we take pleasure in we shouldn't take pleasure in or the kind of pleasure that we take very often it's out of hand and it's out of control and it's not measured and it's

not balanced so there's always an element of wrongdoing whenever we take pleasure that's very often the case because because we live in a sinful world and we're all sinful human beings but very often when we come to think of God we tend not to think of him as being pleased because we kind of relate it to when we are pleased but it's not like that at all God is ultimately pleased if we were able to go to heaven tonight and we were able to sit with God I reckon the first thing that would strike us is the sheer enjoyment of God the sheer thrill of the Godhead the ultimate perfect eternal enjoyment of God that's what there is within the Godhead being father son and holy spirit and in fact the reason that we are able to enjoy in this world is because we're made in the image of God and that's why it's such a nonsense when people tell me are you Christians you're against pleasure rubbish it's the reverse complete nonsense real pleasure is first of all getting back to where real pleasure is which is in

[27 : 02] God and when you begin to enjoy God that's what that's what the first the first catechism tells us what is the chief end of man man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever there's something wrong with you tonight if you're a Christian and you don't enjoy God even if you know that there are things in your life that shouldn't be there we still enjoy God do we not enjoy God or perhaps your sense of fear has clouded out your enjoyment of God if you don't then can I ask you to ask the Lord to restore a sense of joy in him to love him to love him to take pleasure in him because God is the God of ultimate pleasure in heaven tonight there is nothing but pleasure it is all pleasure it's hard for us to think of that isn't it it's hard for us to think about that because on this earth any place where there's all pleasure there's something wrong of course there is it's indulgent but in heaven where there is no sin there is ultimate pleasure because it focuses on god and rests in god and it's a pleasure in which everything is right and good and peaceful and lovely and blissful that's what we call the pleasure of god and that on that day on that moment when jesus was being baptized that's what god announced here is my beloved son in whom i am thrilled i am well pleased in other words there is no pleasure in the universe like the pleasure that god takes in his own son now then we have faith on the one hand and we have jesus on the other hand how then is it possible for you and i tonight to be pleasing with god well let's put these two things together faith by faith in jesus a man or a woman becomes pleasing to god it's as simple as that by faith in jesus a man or a woman becomes pleasing to god let's start with jesus jesus came into the world the purpose for which he came into the world was to pay the price was to die as our substitute and during his life the three years that he lived that he administered amongst people that he that he's taught in which he taught people and he he performed miracles and he and he went about that god was pleased with him and everything that he did his person his character his work tirelessly from day to day he worked for the lord revealing god the father to hundreds of people god was pleased with him there wasn't a single moment in time in which that pleasure was diminished but he was also pleased with him when he was taken and when he was brutally treated and when he was put to death on the cross and when he laid down his life as our substitute and as our sacrifice the bible tells us that god it was at god's hands that he suffered and the bible tells us that it pleased god to crush him so that tells us that it was god wasn't only pleased with his life it's easy for us to believe that but it's a bit more difficult to believe that god was pleased with his death but that's what the bible says is isaiah chapter 53 it pleased the lord to crush him on the cross why was that because scott took some kind of some kind of unnatural pleasure in watching the suffering of his son no but because god knew the purpose for which his son was suffering

and the purpose was to set people men and women free from their sins and god knew that jesus was accomplishing the purpose for which he came into the world to save us completing fulfilling the work that god the father had given him to do and god took pleasure in that work because through that work a people would be gathered to himself who would be cleansed and washed and renewed and raised to newness of life and the world would be saved and where heaven would be filled with men and women like ourselves glorifying god it was always god's purpose to fill heaven that was why jesus came into the world to open the door of heaven and to so that people in their thousands and millions would come in and therefore it pleased god when his own son even amazing and horrific as that sounds it pleased him when he hung on the cross and where he suffered in our instead of us and for us tonight god can take pleasure in people he does all over the world tonight it's not just as if god has saved people and redeemed them and cleansed them from their sins but tonight if a person is following jesus the bible tells us we are in jesus we are connected to jesus and that means that when god sees us he sees us as united to jesus he sees christ in us and us in

christ that's the relationship that we have if we follow jesus tonight in christ inseparably connected with him and if anyone is in jesus then god is pleased with that person with the same pleasure as he takes in his own son now somehow or other i'm not entirely sure how much knowledge that enoch had as he lived his life i think he had more knowledge than we tend to think but somehow or other enoch was brought to faith in jesus who was one day going to come he didn't know what you and i know of the gospels of jesus coming into the world and dying on the cross he didn't know any of that and yet somehow or other god awakened that faith within him that rested in jesus and in jesus alone that's the only way that we can please god whether you're able or whether you're whether you're enoch or whether you're elijah or mooses or david or whoever whoever it is the only way that we can please god tonight and that god assures us that he does take pleasure in us is as we are united with jesus christ as our savior now previously i said that there were only two people who were taken up to heaven but that's not strictly true or at least it is in the past if we go back in the past in the old testament there were two people who were taken up to heaven and who didn't experience death enoch and elijah but looking ahead the bible tells us that when jesus comes there will still be his people alive on the earth when he comes the bible tells us that they will not experience death either and we believe that there will be thousands of them millions of them alive in this world when jesus comes so although up until this moment in time there's only been enoch and elijah looking ahead there will be thousands and millions more who will have the same experience as enoch and elijah

but there's also a sense lastly in which although for us enoch's experience was highly unusual for enoch himself i wonder what the experience was for him going into glory right away an instant transfer an instant translation an instant movement from being one moment on this earth and the next moment in glory must have been strange i wonder if there was any warning given to him as to what was about to happen elijah had warning he knew what was going to happen but we're not told anything similar about enoch so it could have been that he was going about his daily business and all of a sudden he was in glory strange isn't it to think about these things and so easy to speculate as well we'd be very careful before we speculate but i'll tell you one thing that isn't speculation that for the christian even death itself there's a sense in which it actually doesn't exist because death for the christian is simply a momentary transfer from this world into the next now of course there may be sickness there may be pain there may be suffering and there may be a long process where that person suffers and approaches death and yet the experience of death itself actually doesn't exist for a person who's a christian i'll tell you how because jesus himself promised i am the resurrection and the life he who believes in me though he were dead yet shall he live no that's talking about the resurrection he was dead and now he's living the body's raised again but then he says he who lives and believes in me shall never die in other words for you who live and believe in me your experience of death will not exist what a great hope we have what a certainty we have if we believe in the lord jesus tonight the certainty of the resurrection that one day the bodies of believers will be raised to go to be with the lord body and soul forever but even now when a person dies in the lord that transition if you like is instant it's an instant transformation from living in this world to living in the next in other words it's conceivably possible right now and i've actually we've seen this happening on some occasions when a person dies instantly that can happen and it does happen a believer that it's conceivably possible that right now i could be talking to you and in a moment of time be in front of the lord it's a very solemn thought isn't it but it's also a joyful thought that's the promise that we have in christ but you only have it in christ that's what i'm saying you only have it in christ if you don't have christ you don't have this why don't you have it why don't you come why don't you come safely within the fold come home to the lord come through the door that he has opened for you it's for people like you and i that christ died whatever you've done whatever you however you've

lived in this world come to him because he he says he'll abundantly pardon he cleanses us from our sin come to him in your confusion come to him with your questions with all the things that you're mixed up about in your mind come to him as you are come to him and take that promise that he gives that he that lives and believes in me shall never die just like you know just like elijah just like the thousands and millions of other people that have lived and died in jesus be one of them don't be on the outside be one of jesus people and his own children let's pray our father in heaven we thank you once again this evening for once again a reminder of your promise that the key of life and death is in your hands and we pray lord that as we listen to the gospel once again as we as we come to see the greatness of what jesus did and the love that sent him to the cross we pray that we might

see jesus and him alone that we might come to him as he has invited us to in jesus name amen you