

4. We cannot live without faith

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[0 : 00] Now, if you have the Church Bibles there, if you turn to page 4, we've been looking at these early chapters of the Bible under the title Hope in a Hopeless World.

We're going to be looking particularly at Enoch today, Enoch who walked with God. Our title for today is We Cannot Live Without Faith. And we're going to read actually from verses 18 to 32. The verses we'll be looking at particularly are 21 to 24, but we'll begin at verse 18.

This is the long list of names of those who lived for incredibly long spells of time. Verse 18, when Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch.

Jared lived, after he fathered Enoch, 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus, all the days of Jared were 962 years and he died.

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.

[1 : 12] Thus, all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.

When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters.

Thus, all the days of Methuselah were 969 years and he died. 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.

After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham and Japheth. Amen. May God bless to us that reading from his word.

[2 : 25] I'm sure if you were on a programme giving your favourite Bible passage, it's highly unlikely that this particular chapter would feature there.

Someone has said of this chapter, it's rather like the telephone directory, not much of a story, but a wonderful cast of characters. And that's very much the case with this chapter, except that in this chapter, as we've seen already last week, there is tremendous teaching about how to live, not in the world of that day, but how to live in this world.

Now, first of all, a word about the list of names. Now, God is clearly interested in individuals and in the continuity of the story. Think how this would come to life for you if your name was in it.

We all like to see our names in print. And you look at a list and then suddenly your own name springs out and you realise that you matter. And then, of course, if you're in an institution and your name is not on it, then you realise that you don't matter.

You've slipped down the pecking order. Well, so it is here. God is interested in individuals. God is interested in the continuity of the story. But these aren't just any individuals.

[3 : 41] This is the line of Seth, the son of Adam, from whom was to come the one who was to crush the serpent. And that's its place in the big story. The prophecy made in the Garden of Eden, the descendant of the woman will destroy the serpent, will crush the serpent.

And here is the line of promise from which this serpent crusher is to come. But it's a gloomy chapter. And he died. And he died.

And he died. Over and over again, the bell tolls. But one time, the bell did not toll. Chapter, verse 24.

Enoch walked with God. Notice it doesn't say, and he died. It says, and he was not, for God took him. And Hebrews 11 says, by faith Enoch was taken so that he would not see death because he trusted in God.

He lived the life of faith. And just three quick things about these verses. The first thing is this, that walking with God is always difficult.

[4 : 54] There is never an easy time or an easy place to walk with God. Now, don't listen to those who say it was simple in the old days.

People in biblical times lived in an uncomplicated, simple universe. It's very easy for them to believe in God. Very easy for them to believe in the spiritual world. Far, far more difficult for us in our sophisticated technological age.

But that's so untrue if you read chapter 4 because two streams are flowing through these chapters. One stream is marked by death, by sin, by corruption.

As you've been here the last few weeks would see how we saw that, the spread of corruption, the growth of sin as it grips the infant world. There's also another stream flowing. There's the growth of civilization, the growth of culture.

The end of chapter 4, we've got the building of cities, we've got agriculture, we've got the arts, we've got industry, with all their enormous potential for good and for evil.

[6 : 00] In other words, Enoch lived in a world like ours. A world where he would hear voices, where he would see sights, that were not bad in themselves, but wanted to persuade him that they were the whole of reality.

That's the kind of world we live in, isn't it? The world of the newspaper, the world of the internet, the world of television, the world of the shopping centres, the world of our culture, tries to drown out the other voices, the voices that tell us there is a greater reality beyond them.

And Enoch, while he was in God's image, was also in Adam's image, just like all of us. And so it is today. The world will clamour for every minute of our time, for every part of our attention, and our own sinful nature will continually try to drag us down.

And the devil will never give up his attempt to hinder our walk with God. In other words, we are looking at a mirror image of our own world.

The voices heard by Enoch, the sight seen by Enoch, the pressures on Enoch, were exactly the same as the pressures on us. And therefore, the call that comes to Enoch was as difficult for him to respond to as it is for us.

[7 : 22] So please don't let's get this idea. At one time, there was a simple, uncomplicated world where people could walk with God without temptations, without confusion, without any kind of difficulty.

Walking with God is always difficult. That's the first thing I want to say. So, if you haven't actually begun the Christian journey, and you're contemplated beginning it, if you're really serious about it, let me tell you, first of all, it's going to be difficult.

It's not, walking with God is not like getting a letter to the post saying you've won a holiday for two in the Caribbean with all expenses paid.

Walking with God is more like the alarm clock that breaks through your slumber and your somnolence at six o'clock in the morning. It's difficult. It's tough.

But secondly, walking with God is always possible. We mustn't imagine, because of what I've said, that walking with God is a grim and joyless business which can't be done at all.

[8 : 30] And there are two things. First of all, walking with God doesn't happen when we decide, oh, I think I'm going to start walking with God from now on.

Walking with God begins when God's Spirit starts to work in our hearts, brings influences into our lives that lead us in a particular direction.

Enoch, verse 22, walked with God. And the particular verb used there doesn't just mean he went out for a stroll. It's a verb that suggests a continual walking with God, a lifetime of walking with God. And later on in chapter 6, the same thing is going to be said of Noah. But the really significant thing is the first time this verb occurs in Scripture is back in chapter 3, verse 8.

We are told that the Lord God walked in the Garden of Eden. Exactly the same verb and the same form of it. So you see what's being said here? It's being said here that God walks into Enoch's life and invites him.

[9 : 39] Enoch, I want you to come with me. I want you to walk with me. I want you to give your life to me. In other words, the journey is not Enoch's, it's God's.

And God is inviting Enoch to join him as he invites us in this difficult world where all these pressures are. Pressures which the New Testament calls the world with all its civilization, with all its culture,

the flesh, our own weaknesses, and the devil trying to tempt us away. We are asked to join the Lord himself in this walk and walk with him as he carries out his purposes. So that's the first thing, the impulse to walk with God didn't come from Enoch, it came from God himself.

Come Enoch, come with me. Here's a different way of life, here's a better way of life, here's a way of life that will change everything. But the second thing is Enoch's response.

Now we're not told very much about it here, we're simply told that he walked with God. But in Hebrews 11 we are told that Enoch pleased God by walking with him, that Enoch had faith.

[10:57] And Enoch's faith responded to God's call, that is the point. Now this was no vague, mystical feeling.

This was no talent or aptitude that Enoch had. Sometimes people will say something like, I wish I had your faith. Now faith is not a talent and an aptitude which some people have and others don't. Faith is the response to God's call upon our lives. And Hebrews 11 again says, whoever comes to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Now since this walk is not a mere stroll, it's not an experiment, it's a lifelong commitment. That means that we have to be serious about responding to the call of God.

As I said already, it's not a question of just, oh, I think I'll try religion. I think I'll try a different way of life. It's basically God opening our eyes to reality.

[12:09] Now, the point is, how would Enoch know this? And surely he would know this the way that others in these early days before any of the scriptures were written, that he laid himself open to the voice and to the call of God.

He could scarcely have walked with God without God revealing himself to him. And how do we suppose that God revealed himself to no one else at that time?

All these other people, presumably, including, of course, Enoch's own immediate family, must have had the same possibility of responding to God and walking with God as Enoch did.

I mean, Methusel lived 969 years, what's the divine comment on it, and he died. So what? It's so different with Enoch. Enoch was not.

Enoch was not found, for God took him. So walking with God is possible. It's difficult, but it's possible. But the other thing I want to say is this.

[13:14] Walking with God always leads us home. And that's the other point about this story. As I said, the long life spans. What did they do?

They were born, they lived, and they died. There's nothing else recorded of most of them. Almost as if the whole life spans of almost a thousand years had passed, and there was nothing to say about them.

But once here, no undertaker called, no funeral procession follows a coffin. God took him. What's that got to do with us? Well, in the New Testament, Enoch features in two places.

One I've mentioned already, it's in Hebrews 11, but in the letter of Jude, in verses 14 and 15 of that short letter, Enoch appears again, and Jude sees Enoch, not just as a lone figure who walked with God in the great dawn of human history, not just as an individual who stood out from the surrounding culture, but as part of that great multitude who one day are going to stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And Jude sees what happened to Enoch as an anticipation of that great day when God's people from all the ages and from all over the world will be taken into his immediate presence.

[14:37] See what's being said, earth is too small and time is too short to walk with God. Walking with God always leads us home. Now, it's interesting, I think, that at this stage in the story, in Genesis 5, there's no real comment on that because we're at a very early stage, but it's just as when in February you see snowdrops beginning to push their way up through the frozen ground.

Here, in the grey dawn of human history, you begin to see a little light shining that foreshadows the time when the light of God will dawn over the whole world.

Now, generally speaking, when people talk that way about heaven and about the world to come, about the new creation, a common response is that it's far too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use.

I don't know about anybody here, I have never in my life met anyone who was far too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use. I'm certainly not. My problem, my temptation is all the other way round.

The point is that those who are most conscious there is a goal, there is a destination, there is something beyond this world, these people have always been most effective in this world, the people who, like Wilberforce, who dealt with the slave trade, people like Lord Chefsbury and others, people today who work hard the relief of human suffering and so on, they are usually people who are motivated and inspired by the world to come.

[16 : 22] Because, look at it this way, if the story of Genesis 5 were simply the story of the Jared's and the Methuselahs, who lived for hundreds and hundreds of years and he died, that would be a bleak and hopeless view of human life, wouldn't it?

There would be nothing particularly to live for. Even if you lived for centuries, almost a millennium, what's the point? If the end of the story is and he died, whereas if the end of the story is he was not for God took him, then that shows that beyond this world, beyond this life, God's purposes are going to be fulfilled in a new creation.

Let's say this as we finish, the more firmly we believe that Christ will one day return to wind up the affairs of this world and usher in a better one, the more urgently we will engage in all lawful and worthy activities until he comes.

What do you want to be your epitaph? Do you want it to be and he died and she died? What would you much rather have on your tombstone? He or she walked with God.

That's the choice. Let's pray. Father, in this difficult and perplexing world where we find it so hard and so and so sometimes so tiring to walk with you.

[17 : 54] We pray indeed that if we are faulting on our journey you will come to us with new strength. If we are uncertain whether to begin that we will hear your voice calling us and begin on that journey that will lead us through this world to the world to come.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.