

[1]
Champion of Faith: Walking with God.
Hebrews 11:5- 6
July 1, 2018, Jaden Welsh

Intro: Recap from last week, Cain and Abel.

Good morning everyone, my name is Jaden. I grew up here in Campbell River and attended CRBC for many years! I currently live in Nanaimo (I'm here for the summer) and attend Vancouver Island University, I am studying Sociology in order that it contributes towards a Masters of Social Work later.

Last week we heard Brian talk about Cain and Abel in our series, Hero of the Faith. A major theme from the life of these two brothers was how the consequences of sin can lead to death. Brian highlighted the importance of Abel's faith, why he was considered righteous and how the same faith is available to us. Today we will be looking at Enoch, who also lived during this time but was taken by God and spared from experiencing death because of his faith in Jesus.

Hebrews 11:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying "he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. ⁶ And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

I read this and several questions begin to surface: Who is Enoch? Why is he included in the Hebrews chapter of faith? What did he do that the writer (of Hebrews) felt it necessary to include his name with the others drawn to Christ? What is the correlation between walking with God and our ability to trust God?

"*It was by faith...*" every individual's story mentioned in Hebrews 11 (which we will be going through this summer) starts with this statement of faith and ends with a promise. This is a very important theme throughout the whole chapter, why is faith the necessary component in our relationship with God?

Verse 6 is our theme verse for today, I can't please God without recognizing Him first as Lord and in order for me to walk with God, I have to believe He exists; in order that I may receive the reward he has promised for those who seek him.

Genesis 5:21-24 (NLT)

²¹ When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³ Enoch lived 365 years,²⁴ walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

Enoch's story is relatively short, so short in fact that if you blink, it can be easily missed. For those of you unfamiliar with the story of Enoch, (which could be most of us), let's read before and after these few short lines in order to understand his life and context.

Enoch was the 7th generation from Adam, and the first of three to be physically taken up into heaven, the other two being Elijah and Jesus. If we were to continue reading, we would see that Noah (4 generations later) is the great grandson of Enoch who is tasked with surviving the coming flood. Upon our initial reading of this passage, the great question that arises from the life of Enoch is this: **What does it *really* mean to walk with God?**

Story-

As I dwelt on this question, I admit this process of walking with God challenged me greatly. I confess, God has been stretching me this past year as I sought to understand what it means to walk with God in my own life. I currently live in Nanaimo and there is a beautiful 6km walk around Westwood Lake that is easily accessible for the adventurous spirit. I find for myself, the way that I grow closer to God is to find a quiet place, away from the distractions, the stress, the worries. I do my best to remove everything in my life so the only thing that remains is Jesus.

I was walking the foreshore not too long ago and I recall this moment of feeling utter content. Have you ever felt this in your own life? In that moment I desired nothing, aside from this time with God. We didn't even talk much, I just sat there and allowed myself to soak it all in.

To walk with someone is to enjoy their company on the journey. The destination (heaven/eternity) is the wholly good conclusion, but the method to which I arrive is dependent upon having a relationship with Christ.

It is Jesus who permits me to enter into Heaven *because* he is the author and perfecter of my faith (**Hebrews 12:2**). Only the Creator is able to influence the creation. If there is one thing that I have understood from the Conquer Series is that I lack the capacity to change simply by my own power. I am a dependant. I require the Lord to guide, heal and uplift me if I am to succeed. I cannot travel very far alone. Therefore, Christ is *necessary* if I hope to have a relationship with God.

It is possible but not probable, that God could physically take me up into heaven. It is reasonable to concur that what happened to Enoch will most likely not be the same occurrence for most of us (and if it is, we certainly have nothing to worry about!) which is why it is essential to ask the question: *How can I walk with God?*

Before I continue, I want to clarify a very important truth in the life of Enoch that resonates the uniqueness and love of our Lord: The gods of pagan mythology found in ancient Mesopotamia at that time (and other mythologies), these gods are not your friend. Enoch would have been exposed to these malevolent beliefs, yet still choose to trust God and no one else. These "gods" are dictators caught in a cycle of destruction and never ending power struggles. There is nothing within them that values a mortal above their own life, they are both capricious and untrustworthy.

Can you imagine waking up in the morning, rolling over in bed and asking your wife “Alright hunny, which kid are we gonna offer up today so that our crops can grow plentiful?” Yikes. I wouldn’t want to live in such an abusive relationship and fear of condemnation. So why did Enoch decide to trust God and not follow the cultural norm?

All of our questions in the Old Testament can be answered and fulfilled through Jesus. This is why when Jesus claims to be our friend, it completely goes against the world’s concept of what a god is supposed to be. So what does Jesus mean when he says we are friends of God and how does he enable us to walk with God? In order to narrow in on this concept, let’s take a look at the primary source (the words of Jesus) found in the Gospel of John.

John 15:9-17 (NLT)

9 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

I will hide nothing from you, upon reading this passage, I felt an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. So I had to ask myself, what is God’s motivation for choosing me? Why does he value Jaden? I don’t understand why he would consider me his friend, out of the billions of people, why me?

Now Jesus was a really good communicator. In this passage there are promises. He promises to love us (9+10), to talk with us (11+15), to experience immeasurable Joy (11) and the opportunity to share this “fruit” with others (16+17).

Before I can talk with God, recall that I need to first *believe* that God exists. This why Jesus says “I have told you these things” and “I have told you everything the Father has told me” in order that my faith has a foundation, a focal point, a place of origin. A reason. Everything God revealed to Jesus, Jesus revealed to us. He didn’t hide anything from us. 100% transparent and authentic truth through a means that we can understand.

Notice verse 15 “*I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves.*” I see Jesus piercing my fearful thoughts. I fear that I cannot be a friend to God, especially if I believe he is “up there and out there.” I feel in my own life there are too many things that prevent me from having an intimate relationship with God. That overwhelming sense of inadequacy quickly turns into a doubt that I cannot be near to God.

This is why I struggle in understanding God when says he is my friend. The insecurities I have in my life make it really difficult to trust Jesus.

Story time

One of my reasons as to why I don't always trust God is through the wound I received by my biological father leaving me at a young age. I wrestle with God when he says he is a "good father." My insecurities and wounds arouse subtle doubts that try to dismantle the truth of what Jesus is promising here. If my own father wouldn't confide in me, why should I trust God when he says he wants to be my friend? How do I know that God is not going to abandon me at some point?

Which is why I find it so odd that Jesus would die for me. Why would God care about me? I have accomplished many great and awful things that should put me very far from a relationship with the Lord. Certainly, I am the last person a wholly benevolent God would want to even talk to, let alone have a relationship with. I get caught up on this idea that it's not okay to doubt God's promises, that I need to somehow blindly trust Him and that by doubting, I am preventing myself from walking with God.

Which is why I love verse 16, it holds a special place in my heart: "You didn't choose me, I choose you." That's a powerful truth. Jesus' words are relatable, personal and intimate. The greatest lie the enemy tries to use on me is that I *need* to know the thoughts and reasoning of God. That there must be *more* to the picture, I *have* to know why. Because every other "god" out there doesn't simply help a mortal without some alternative, often malevolent motivation.

It's perfectly okay to doubt God. It's okay to ask these questions. There, I said it. We can all relax. Doubts are *necessary* for they breed *reasons*. By questioning God, I allow Him to reach me in a special way. Suddenly my faith has the opportunity to become my own. It is no longer my parents faith, or my friends faith, or my churches faith, it is my own faith. I have given Jesus an opportunity to respond to my questions *in order that I may see and believe*. The truth of the Gospel is simple and genuine, "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me." Need I know more? I feel content in God *because* I believe him when he says he is my friend.

Paul reiterates this idea of being friends of God in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 5:6-11 (NLT)

6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

I shouldn't get caught up in trying to understand the motivation and thoughts of God, for Grace goes against my understanding. Rather, the expectation is that I may seek the "Joy" that is

promised upon receiving this gift of salvation. The Joy that is brought about through having a relationship with Jesus is a recurring promise as we continually enter into relationship with Him.

Upon hearing this, I have two choices in how I wish to respond to Jesus. I can either make decisions that lead me closer to Christ or farther away from him. I like to think that I am good person and that most of what I do is pretty good (this is my pride speaking) but the Psalmist poetically responds to this artificial dichotomy by clarifying that *"No, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one!" (Psalm 14:3, NLT).*

Everyone aside from Christ is subject to sin, no one is safe nor above the reality that we are imperfect creations. Enoch may have been quite the man of God, but even he was still subject to sin.

Story

I was working at camp a few years back, and I admittedly was not walking with the Lord at the time. I had a dream one evening where I was sitting before a judge, listening to my sentence and all the terrible crimes I had committed. Upon reviewing my case, the Judge found me guilty and sentenced me to death.

I have never felt so alone. I felt vulnerable, shamed, and abandoned, with an overwhelming amount of despair gripping my soul. I knew I was doomed. But then a man spoke up from the audience and asked if he could take the punishment in my place. The Judge agreed and I was set free.

I knew right away that that man was Jesus. You see, God did not threaten or bully me into believing in Him, instead I was able to witness a future without Jesus. I knew I was guilty and I knew I deserved punishment for my crimes. But God was gracious enough to help me understand how important Christ's sacrifice truly is. Without it, I couldn't be free. He allowed me to witness the reality of sin, what it does to my soul, and the consequences of my actions; but most importantly he gave me a way out.

The crescendo of this truth begins with **Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)** *"And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."* The very essence of this message is that we cannot please God without faith and the only way to achieve that reality is to first believe that God is real and through that recognition, abide in Christ as he abides in us.

Christ suffered the cross for my salvation, that I may enter into relationship with God. Recall that we are *friends of God because of Christ*. The underlying truth within the necessity of the cross is that I was given the ability to choose a side. Without the option of choice, I am destined for destruction because of the sin within me. I simply require a Saviour.

One of my favourite thinkers, A.W. Tozer, at the beginning to *Knowledge of the Holy* briefly states that *"What comes into our minds when think about God is the most important thing about us."* I love that quote. It is absurd to try dealing with my sin if I first do not acknowledge God. It is also impossible. Which is why Jesus is so *necessary* if I hope to grow a relationship with God.

He is our great champion. Our Saviour. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." Jesus made this promise and fulfilled it through his sacrifice. This how Enoch

was saved, through Christ. His faith pleased God and the reward that was promised, which is grace, was given to him.

As our time together concludes, I would like each of us to dwell on these thoughts:

Why is God pleased with my life?

How can I walk with God this week?

These questions are not to be answered alone, rather they are a statement we proclaim together. Accountability is integral to the survival of the church and to our faith. We are each tasked with the responsibility of answering these questions with both diligence and joy. Let us not settle for a *mere* acknowledgement of pleasing God, for it brings God (and myself) great Joy when I not just *know*, but *believe* that God loves me.

Together let us press forward with a kingdom mindset. As we transition into communion let us dwell on the sacrifice of Christ, who suffered the cross, to initiate and perfect our faith, so that we may be considered friends of God and create everlasting fruit that multiplies love.

Hebrews 12:1+2 (NLT)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God’s throne.”

Joy awaited Christ and that same Joy awaits us. Let’s pray.

- **End in Prayer.**