

Hebrews 11:5

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[0 : 00] If you turn back with me to the portion of God's Word that we read together in Hebrews and in chapter 11 and at verse 5 you find, by faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death. He could not be found because God had taken him away. For before he was taken he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews chapter 11 is one of the better known chapters in the New Testament. It's one that people often like to read and think about. But there's a danger in reading it on its own.

If we look at it in isolation we certainly are made aware of the portrait gallery of the faithful and that's something that's well worthy of our attention. But if that's all we're seeing we're forgetting that it's written, this chapter, chapter 11 is written as part of a letter.

And that throughout that letter the writer is presenting a connected argument. And therefore we will gain greater insight into the portraits that we find in the portrait gallery of chapter 11 if we set them in the context in which they are presented by the writer.

That's why I began reading not at the beginning of chapter 11 but back a little bit into chapter 10. Because when we do that we see that these words were written to people whose faith was flagging. This portrait gallery is designed as a means of encouragement to those whose spiritual temperature had become dangerously low. The author is writing to deal with the situation of those who were suffering from spiritual hypothermia. And he has two courses of treatment.

[2 : 44] He begins in chapter 10 by reminding them of what it was like for them themselves at an earlier stage. He first of all recalls to their minds how in earlier days they had been ardent in their faith.

He sets before them the remembrance of the way things once were to stir them up. To alert them to the gravity of the situation and also to encourage them to grasp once more the love, the ardor, the faith they once had.

Notice particularly the words in verse 34. You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property. He's saying there was a time when you were living as those who had a totally different set of values from this world.

Look back to those former days when the word of truth first impacted in your life. What happened then? You were able to weigh in the balances of eternity, the goods of this world.

And you were able to assess them for what they truly are worth. In those days you'd been certain about the reality of the better and lasting possessions that were yours in Jesus Christ.

[4 : 18] Can't you remember that, he says? To have begun well, that says much.

But what's necessary is to finish well. And that's achieved only by living the life of faith. My righteous one will live by faith.

So the first course of treatment is a course of treatment that asks us individually. Look back. Look back. Consider what you have already experienced.

How it is if the Lord has come into your heart. How it was in those first days of true commitment to him.

And assess your need now in the light of that. So that you are stirred up to renewed endeavor in the faith. But the author doesn't leave it there.

[5 : 30] He begins a second course of treatment for the spiritual hypothermia that he detects amongst those to whom he's writing.

He's going to stir up their faith by illustrating the difference that the perspective of faith makes in our present existence and makes to our future prospects.

And that's why he engages in this series of case studies of the heroes of the faith drawn from the records of the Old Testament.

It's not just historical antiquarian interest. It's not just looking back and saying, oh, those were nice stories about these men and these women.

He's saying, here are models. Here are spiritual examples that can serve now to show the way in which you should react to the gravity of losing the zeal, the edge of your faith.

[6 : 39] Now this morning I want to focus just on one of these portraits. That of Enoch. The fact is that in Scripture we're told remarkably little about him.

But that doesn't mean that the sermon now stops. We're told remarkably little about him. But we're told here in this passage something that gives us real insight.

In the New Testament, he's mentioned here. He's mentioned also in Luke's genealogy of Christ. Just a name. And he's also mentioned in the epistle of Jude.

Where Enoch is called the seventh from Adam. Looking at the ancients. Looking back at the generations. What we know of those who lived before the flood.

And we're told in the book of Jude that Enoch prophesied of impending judgment. On the ungodly generation in which he lived.

[7 : 47] Such information as we have about him. Apart from those three instances in the New Testament. Is found in Genesis chapter 5. Where we're told that when Enoch had lived 65 years.

He became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah. Enoch walked with God 300 years. And had other sons and daughters.

Altogether Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God. Then he was no more. Because God took him away.

In that portrait of Enoch. Very few words. But there's one expression that's repeated.

He walked with God. What does that imply? It describes a life of harmony.

[8 : 53] With God. If we walk with God. We don't set the pace. At which things develop.

We don't determine the direction. In which we're going. He does. And far from demurring at that arrangement.

Enoch heartily assented to it. He is one who is presented. As walking with God. A picture of harmony.

Because Enoch allowed God. To determine the pace. At which he lived. And the direction. That his life took. And on that basis.

There was true fellowship. Between Enoch and God. God. And then we're told. Surprisingly. And rather enigmatically.

[9 : 54] He was no more. Because God. Took him. If we had had time. To read through Genesis 5. It would have been surprising.

To read simply. He was no more. Because one of the features. Of Genesis 5. In the brief portraits. He gives. Of the lives.

Of this ancient generation. Each ends with the words. And he died. The destiny of all mankind. And he died.

But that's not. True of Enoch. The description. That's given of him. Breaks through that pattern. He was not. It's clearly not.

A euphemism. For death. It's not. A way of expressing. Removal. To some other. Geographical location. It refers.

[10 : 53] To nothing. Other than. What's technically termed. Translation. The immediate. Passing. Of both. Body and soul. From earth.

To heavenly glory. Without. Undergoing. The experience. Of death. Death. And that understanding. Is corroborated. By what's said. Here in Hebrews.

So that he did not. Experience. Death. Neither. In Hebrews. Not in Genesis.

Is there any hint. Given. As to why. Enoch. Was selected. For this. Privileged. Experience.

Elsewhere. In scripture. We're told about it.

Only in connection. With Elijah. And of the generation. Of believers. Who will be alive. At the time. Of Christ's second coming. And who will be caught up.

[11 : 48] To meet their Lord. In the air. But apart from those other instances. We're not told. Of any. Who. Did.

Or will. Enjoy this experience. It's not an attempt. To put Enoch. Down. To suppose.

That there have been others. Who've lived. Just as holy a life. As he did. One can think. For instance. Of Christ himself. The one who always. Did what pleased his father. And he. Was not. Translated. He was not. Taken from earth. To heaven. Without the experience. Of death.

Why was it true of Enoch? Well. It's been suggested. That it may very well. Have been designed. By God. As public corroboration. Of the divine origin.

[12:44] Of the message. Which he had been. Giving. To his. Contemporaries. To his. The ungodly generation. In which he lived. But be that as it may.

It happened. It happened. That Enoch. Was given. This unique experience. Of passing. Directly. From living.

In this world. To the glory. Of heaven. And that would not. Have been possible. Had Enoch. Not previously. Been. Walking.

With God. Now. That raises. Two problems. The first. Easily dealt with. Genesis 5. Genesis 5. Says. Enoch. Walked. With God. But here. In Hebrews. His spiritual. Experience. Is described. Using other words. In.

[13:41] Hebrews. We are told. That. Enoch. Pleased. God. They mean. The same thing. What's happened. Is that the writer.

To the Hebrews. Is quoting. Exemptly. The early Greek translation. Of the Septuagint. And its translators. Avoided. As far as they could.

Anthropomorphic language. Concerning God. God. They thought. If they said. That somebody. Walked. With God. It would conjure up. For the people.

Who read their translation. The idea. That God. Was in some way. A physical being. Who could go. On a walk. With someone else. So. They rendered. The Hebrew expression.

In a dynamic fashion. Trying to bring out. The sense. Of the phrase. Rather than. Woodenly. Transferring the metaphor. From one language. To another. No doubt. When they were making.

[14:34] Their translation. They had in mind. A thought. Rather like that. You find in. The prophecy of Amos. Can two walk together. Except they be agreed. And.

They in fact. Did manage. The Septuagintal. Translators. To convey. The essence. Of the Old Testament. Description. Of this man of faith. He walked with God. He pleased God.

Whoever. Walks with him. Letting God. Dictate. Both the pace. And the direction. Pleases him. Because that individual. Is keeping in step.

With God's ways. And following. His directions. So the difference. Of phraseology. Between walking with God.

And pleasing God. It's really just. An outward difference. It isn't. A fundamental difference. At all. They are describing. The same.

[15:30] Harmonious. Dedicated life. But. There's another problem. Because the writer.

To Hebrews. Is. Talking about faith. That's what he wants. To focus in on. And it's not. Specifically. Stated. In Genesis. That Enoch. Was. A man of faith. Death. So what does the writer. Do here. He argues.

Back. From what was. Stated. To what. Underpinned it. There was no doubt. That Enoch. Was taken. That is. That he was. Translated.

While he was still alive. On earth. He received. This testimony. This commendation. That he walked. With God. So there's this. There is. First of all. The fact of Enoch's translation.

[16:26] There's the fact. Of Enoch's commendation. He walked. With God. He journeyed on. From this world. In a remarkable way. Because he walked. With God.

Death wasn't permitted. To intrude. Into the harmony. Between heaven and earth. Which characterized. His life. And the author says. That can only happen.

When there's faith. Without faith. It is impossible. To please God. So he says. I'm talking about Enoch. We're not told.

That he believed. We're not told. That he'd faith. What we're told. Is he pleased God. But that's enough. Because it's. Without faith.

It is impossible. To please God. And on that basis. The by faith. With which verse 5 begins. Is fully justified. But the writer's not content.

[17:25] With that piece of. Spiritual logic. Remember. He's writing. For people. Who have believed.

But who are experiencing. Difficulties. In their life of faith. And he's wanting. To encourage them. To stir them up. To get things going.

Again. And so the writer here. Probes. The spiritual dynamic. That's involved.

In faith. He doesn't just say. Without faith. It's impossible. To please God. He says. Here's the reason. Why? Because.

Anyone. Who comes. To him. Must believe. That he exists. And that he rewards. Those. Who earnestly. Seek him. Enoch.

[18:23] Still in the background. But this. Is a lesson. That is. Generally. True. Here is the portrait. Of faith. But it is. A specific. Example.

Of something. That is true. Throughout. The whole existence. Of mankind. This. Is. The way. In which. Faith. That is. Pleasing.

To God. Operates. Is alive. Moves forward. And there are. The three aspects. Anyone.

Who comes. To him. Comes. To him. Now the verb. Is one. That's the author.

Of the letter. To the Hebrews. Has used. A number of times. He's used it. Back in chapter. 4. Verse 16. Where it's rendered. Approach. In the NIV.

[19:17] Let us then. Approach. The throne of grace. With confidence. He's used it. In chapter 7. Verse 25. Those who. Come. To God.

Through him. In chapter 10. Verse 22. He uses the same. Verb again. Let us. Draw near. To God. God. And in chapter 12.

Verse 22. He talks about. You have come. To Mount Zion. So. This approach. That he's describing. Anyone who. Comes. To him. It's not a casual. Approach. It is. A deliberate. Approach. In a context. Of worship. This isn't. A casual. Approach. Of a tourist. Who is engaged. In some form. Of spiritual. Sightseeing. It's the reverential.

[20:15] Approach. Of one. Who would. Really. Seek. To enter. In. To spiritual. Fellowship. With God. It's the same.

Word. That's used. Of approaching. The throne of grace. Approaching God. Coming to Mount Zion. One. It's a word. That has got in it. A solemn.

Focused. Determined. Approach. It's a distinctive. Action. Which arises. From a distinctive. Attitude. It was true. Of Enoch. Remember. We're looking. At this illustration. This portrait. In the portrait. Gallery. It marked. Enoch off. From the godless age. In which he lived.

And this approach. Still marks off. Those who have. A true heart's concern. To come. To know. And be in fellowship.

[21:11] With. The one true. And living God. They come. To him. With. A seriousness. With a determination.

Rather like that. Of Jacob. Not. To let God go. Until he blesses. And this. It separates. The one. Who is determined.

To know God. From. Contemporaries. It's not just. Something that's true. At times of worship. On a Sunday morning. That's included. But it's.

To be heard. Against the background. Of the whole. Of Enoch's life. The whole. Of his walk. With God. He conducted. The whole. Of his life. As one.

Who would. Come near. Draw near. Approach. With reverence. The God. Whom he sought. To honor. And serve. So.

[22:08] This. General description. Anyone who comes. To him. Applies at one level. To Enoch. But it's a general description. That applies. In every generation. If we want.

To come close to. And live in fellowship. With God. But he goes on. Anyone who comes. To him. Must believe. That he exists.

And that he rewards. Those. Who earnestly. Seek him. That. He. Exists.

Believes. That. He. Exists. This is faith. Faith. Grasps. The being. And reality.

Of God. If you take. The first verse. Of chapter 11. As a definition. Of faith. Then what we've got.

[23:05] Described here. Corresponds. To the second part. Of that definition. Faith is being. Sure. Of what we hope. For. And certain. Of what we do not. See.

Believes. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. He exists. God. Is immense. And invisible. We can't. Put him. Under. A microscope. We can't.

Discover him. At the end. Of a telescope. To seek. To achieve. Physical. Discernment. Of God. God. Is to commit. An elementary.

Category. Mistake. It's not that God doesn't exist. But that he is spirit. Not subject. To gross scientific analysis. Having faith.

That is to believe. Requires acknowledgement. Of the existence of God. Faith is never exercised. In a vacuum.

[24 : 02] Something. Something. Or someone. Has to be there. To be trusted in. To be believed. To be accepted. And God is not only there.

He always has been. And always will be there. That's what faith is accepting. God is the fundamental reality. There was never a time.

When God initially. Came into existence. And there will never be a time. When he ceases. To exist. That was why.

In revealing himself. To his covenant people. He delighted to. Make himself known. By the name. I am. Who I am.

That is his name. It's not a title. It's a unique. Personal. Name. Summing him up. As the one. Who is. Life. Existence.

[24 : 57] And perpetually that. And it pleases God. Still. When the absolute reality. Encapsulated. In his covenant name. Is known. And acknowledged. And not just acknowledged. As a. In an impersonal fashion. As a distant relationship.

But in a bond. Of fidelity. And trust. He. Anyone. Who. Comes. To him. Must. Believe. That he is. Now. It's often remarked. That the Bible. Doesn't argue. For the existence. Of God. It presupposes.

That truth. That's what you find. In the very first verse. Of Genesis. In the beginning. God. God. Created the heavens. And the earth. God is there. And there is no attempt.

[25 : 52] Made to. Say where he came from. Because it's self-defeating. He's always been there. The Bible. Denounces. The fool. For saying. There is no God.

Because the fool. Is so blatantly. Disregarding. The obvious. But people. Often ask. Are there. Grounds. For saying this. You'll find those.

Who present. This thought. As saying. There is a God. That's a step. In the dark. It's not reasonable. It's contrary. To the evidence. In fact.

If you look at things. Belief in God. Is natural. It's disbelief. In him. That has to be. Argued for. That has to. Grapple.

With the evidence. You can't. Examine God. As I said. You can't. Put God. Under the microscope. Or find him. At the end.

[26 : 48] Of the telescope. But you can. And you must. Examine the works. Of his hands. Whether you use.

The telescope. Or the microscope. You'll find. That the universe. In which we live. Isn't neutral. Albert Einstein. Once made. The famous comment.

The most. Incomprehensible. Thing. About the universe. Is that it is. Comprehensible. The most. Incomprehensible.

Thing. About the universe. Is that it is. Comprehensible. It makes sense. And it's. The fact. That it makes sense. Bears testimony.

To the existence. Of the creator. Who designed it. There was the old argument. The argument. From design. That envisaged.

[27 : 43] A farm laborer. Walking through a field. And kicking with his foot. First a stone. And then. Oh. What's this? And picks it up. And finds it. It's a watch.

And as he looks at it. And examines the way. In which it works. He says. This. Has been made. By someone. It's not absolute proof.

But it is. Perceptive. Because it bears. The watch. With its mechanism. Bears testimony. To a watchmaker. And the same thing.

Can be updated. In modern terms. And has been. In terms of the theory. Of intelligent design. In many areas. Of scientific endeavor.

But especially. In biology. There's been discovered. Discovered an exquisite world. Of living cells. At the microscopic level.

[28 : 43] With wonderful properties. Some of them. Revolving. A hundred thousand times a minute. And as they're examined. They bear evidence.

That they have been designed. And especially. It's the case. That when they're all together. Functioning as a cell. There sometimes. Can be as many. As different. As many different. Proteins. As 30. All present. And needed. For the life. Of that cell. Remove one of the proteins. And the cell doesn't work. It's irreducibly complex. You can't simplify it. Without destroying it. And in its irreducible complexity. It strongly suggests. That it's deliberately. And simultaneously. Brought into existence. By an intelligent being. The fact. [29 : 44] That is found. Is that of irreducible complexity. It still requires faith. To say. That intelligent being.

Is God. The creator of heaven and earth. God. You can't. Examine God. But if you look. At the works of his hands.

There's testimony there. Of the wonder. Of God. But perhaps. You're not of a scientific bent. Consider the evidence.

Of Jesus Christ. There. There. There. You have the one. Who claims. To be God. Manifest. In the flesh. How do you account. For Jesus Christ.

And the claims. He makes. There too. You're led. Not to logically. Coercive. Proof. But to.

[30 : 42] To persuasive. Perception. That's hard. To invade. God is. And faith. Looks at the whole of life.

On the basis. Of this fundamental. Perception. god exists anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists but that also that he rewards those who earnestly seek him and that corresponds to the first part of the definition that's in the first verse faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see certain of what we do not see corresponds to that he exists and sure of what we hope for corresponds to he rewards those who earnestly seek him because he's we're told not just of the existence of god but of his moral character not just of his reality but of his righteousness he is the moral ruler of this universe who acts in accordance with moral principles indeed it goes beyond his righteousness to his generosity the passage talks about rewards you'll find it quite often often mentioned in hebrews but these rewards are not pointing to our personal achievement they're not in any way associated with the theory of salvation by works that's to misunderstand the whole message of grace what did god come to abraham and say back in genesis 15 don't be afraid abraham i am your shield your very great reward the reward is god giving himself exercising faith isn't in some way meritorious establishing a claim on god it is rather that this reward is displaying the bounty and the goodness of the god who gives himself to those who please him and they are described here also as those who earnestly seek him now it's just one word in the original and you'll find some modern translations who just say those who seek him but it's a compound word and one element of the compound signifies intensity the intensity of those who ask seek and knock those who are looking for something more than a dilettante acquaintance who aim to be more than mere dabblers in religion there is nothing more pernicious for a soul's welfare than persistent dabbling in spiritual things that is like an anesthetic to the conscience rather than leading on to true knowledge and achievement and that's what the writer here is concerned about people with spiritual hypothermia people who are no longer alive and as warm within as they once were so he intensifies the word he says there has to be this earnestness there has to be this committed seeking genuine persistence avoid being like in the situation of the seeds sown in rocky places where it's received with joy but has no root or like the seed among the thorns choked out by the worries of this life the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things earnestly seeking him is not a situation where the word is going to be choked or where there is going to be no root but there is going to be progress

and to such God gives of himself when you come to church what are you looking for when you think about life what are you aiming at when we look at ourselves in the light of eternity what is it that takes hold of our hearts and motivates us I think it's really the last word in verse 6 that we have to grapple with who earnestly seek him there are many who earnestly seek but they don't know what there are many who have a desire for bliss happiness unending enjoyment that's not the way we're talking about the man who walked with God we're talking about the man who pleased God and the illustration is of the one who earnestly seeks him and in the proclamation of the gospel we're told there's only one way of approaching him and that's through Jesus

I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me and if we're looking at ourselves and probing where it is we are and what we're thinking we're doing the challenge is are we earnestly seeking God through Jesus Christ is everything else in second place is everything else kept out of the picture till we are sure of this because if we can do that we're following in the footsteps of Enoch we're on the route that God wishes us to be and the destination and the consequences will follow seek to grasp happiness either in this world or the world to come in and of itself and it doesn't work but seek happiness in the world and in the world to come through first of all earnestly seeking him is the pathway to spiritual success anyone who comes to him must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of those who earnestly seek him let's pray something more