

Hebrews 11:6

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[0 : 00] I remember on one occasion as a young Christian in Inverness, we had a visit from a minister whom many of you know very well, or knew very well.

And myself and another young Christian asked this minister, how long did he spend each day for his quiet time?

And he didn't answer immediately. And then he said something which completely puzzled us. He said, I don't have a quiet time. We said, you must. You must have a quiet time. Every Christian has a quiet time. You must have a quiet time.

Well, he said, I don't. Well, we said, we don't understand. Why don't you have a quiet time? He said, words that I've never forgotten.

[1 : 06] He said, I spend my time in God's presence. That was something totally new to my thinking as a young Christian.

He said, I don't trip in and trip out of God's presence like that. I don't have half an hour or an hour. I spend my day with God. So that when I'm studying, I'm in God's presence.

When I'm preparing a sermon, I'm in God's presence. When I'm going out to visit people, I'm in God's presence. Do you know, we never forgot that.

A man who walked and talked with God. Remarkable. So I'm not going to ask you this morning, how long do you spend in God's presence?

That's between you and God. But bear in mind what this old minister said. I spend my time in God's presence.

[2 : 23] Enoch walked with God. And it's actually difficult from those verses in Genesis 5 to understand really what it means to walk with God.

All we know is that he walked with God for 300 years. That's a long, long, long time.

So let's look at what it says in Hebrews. And see if Hebrews can help us understand just a little more of what it means to walk with God.

And there in these two verses in chapter 11, verses 5 and 6, we read that Enoch was commended because he pleased God.

Now, how do we please God? You might say, I please God by doing this or doing that or attending this meeting or helping this person.

[3 : 40] No, it's not that at all. Because further on it says in verse 6, without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Enoch pleased God. Enoch was a man of faith. That is what pleases God. And that's what it's saying here in verse 6.

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.

Do you believe God exists? I do. Have you ever seen God? No.

Neither have I. And yet, I believe in God. And some people would say that if you believe in someone whom you've never seen, you're mad.

[4 : 54] Have you ever seen the wind? No, you haven't. You've seen the effect of the wind.

You've seen the trees, the branches moving. You've seen the grass being moved by the wind that you have never seen the wind. Because you can't see the wind.

But you can see the effects of the wind. When I was traveling here this morning, I noticed some big electric pylons.

These great big metal structures that carry umpteen high-voltage cables. And I was looking at those cables.

Now, I know that there's electricity inside them, but I couldn't see it. Can you see electricity? No, you can't. You can see the effect of electricity.

[6 : 03] But you cannot see it. But believe me, if you touch a live wire, you'll know what electricity is.

You may not be able to see it, but it's there. Every day of our lives, we express faith. When I go into the bathroom in the morning, as I'm walking in, I press the switch and the light comes on.

How do I know the light's going to come on? I just know it's going to come on. When I turn on the tap, I expect water to come.

I don't even doubt it. If I doubted it, probably I wouldn't even turn on the tap. I expect water to come because I know that there's water in that tap even though I can't see it until I open it.

every day of our lives, we express faith. And in fact, every single one of you at this very precise moment in time is expressing faith.

[7 : 17] Every one of you, without a single exception, from the youngest to the oldest, you're all expressing faith at the moment that the bench you're sitting on will hold you up.

Very simple. That is faith. When I climb onto the bus in the morning to go to work, I expect to be deposited at my work. And it happens.

Every day of our lives we express faith. God is pleased with His children when they express faith in Him.

He rewards those who diligently seek Him or who deliberately put their faith in Him.

Tell me, have you ever deliberately put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? I hope you have. It is the most important step that you will ever take in your life.

[8 : 22] Enoch pleased God because he was a man who walked by faith.

God knew him so well. Legend says that one day Enoch and God were walking and talking and walking and walking until Enoch was a great distance from his house.

and God said to Enoch it's a long way for you to go home. You come with me.

That's what legend says. But in actual fact something like that did happen because God took Enoch away and there is no record of him dying.

God took him because he was a man who pleased God. He was a man who walked with God. And I wonder do I walk with God?

[9 : 45] Do I please God? Is my life pleasing to God? God when we put our faith in God and when we walk by faith that is very pleasing to God.

Because what God wants of every one of us is that we put our faith in the finished work of his son the Lord Jesus Christ. Not in the church.

Not in the minister. Not in the elders. But in the son of God that we put our faith in him. Because it's in him that we have salvation.

He died for our son. I wonder have you taken that step? Because if you haven't you need to and sooner rather than later.

You can never be too early but you can be too late. Enoch was a man who pleased God.

[10 : 53] Enoch walked with God. And then we read that fascinating incident in Luke's Gospel. In Luke chapter 5.

Where we have a group of men who took their friend to see Jesus. We don't know much about the friends but we do know something.

Something very precious. They got to the fringe of that huge crowd of people. They were unable to get into the room where Jesus was.

They couldn't get their friend into Jesus' presence. Their friend was unable to help himself. He was paralyzed.

He couldn't walk. There was nothing he could do for himself. He was dependent on his friends. And his friends wanted to bring him to Jesus.

[12 : 08] Jesus. Have you got friends like that? You know, there's lots of empty seats as I look around.

Every church I go to in Scotland has got empty seats. I would love to take you to Africa where the opposite is the case.

Where if you don't get to church in time, you stand. Or you look in the window because all the seats are taken. Church after church after church packed.

Why? Because people have a hunger for God. People have a hunger for God.

The church to which I went as a missionary in 1973. In 1973. It was a small church.

[13:19] It was full of cracks. You could have put your hand through the wall in places. But that church was growing.

Maybe that's why the cracks were there. So we built a new building around the old building. And we built up the walls, built them up until we came to the level of the roof.

And then we knocked down the old building and threw the bricks out the window of the new and then put on the roof. When we went back to visit that church in September last year, that church was full.

that church was overflowing. And I asked why the church was overflowing.

And we arrived at a time when they were having a week of prayer. Ever heard of that? They started at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon.

[14:29] And they prayed in blocks of ninety minutes all through Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday to three o'clock. And then they stopped.

In blocks of ninety minutes, they prayed for international problems. problems. They prayed for national problems and needs.

They prayed for local problems and needs. They prayed for their church. They prayed for their outreach to surrounding villages.

One whole week. And there was not one moment during that whole week when there were not voices lifted up to God from that church.

in prayer. We were mightily impressed. And they said, it's a pity you're not going to be here on such and such a date.

[15:32] We said, what's happening then? They said, we're going out to the bush for three days of fasting and prayer. Three days out in the bush.

Away from their homes. Away from their villages. Away from every comfort. Spending the time with God in prayer. We talked to one old lady.

And in the African scheme of things, a very old lady, she was just over 60. They don't usually live that long. And we said to our lady, is it not difficult for you to go?

Is it not too much for you? Oh, pastor, she said, no. This is what makes us strong. we went as missionaries to teach those people.

We are the ones who are being taught by those people. A church on the move. Staggering.

[16:50] God at work. Maybe it was something like that that these friends of this man, this paralyzed man, experienced. When they arrived at the house where Jesus was, crowds of people, they couldn't get in.

And they could have legitimately said, we tried, but there's no way, let's go home. No, these men were made of sterner stuff than that.

These men climbed up onto the roof of the house. They broke open a hole in the roof of the house. You ever think of it? Someone had to pay for that. They took the responsibility of that. And they lowered their friend down into Jesus' presence.

life. And what they had wanted to do, they had achieved. Their work was finished. They had determined that they would get this man into the presence of Jesus.

[18:08] They had succeeded. They had done what they set out to do. Their work was finished. They were now bystanders. But oh, there's a remarkable thing happens.

Look at verse 20. Luke chapter 5, verse 20. It's remarkable.

The verse comes in two halves. And the first half said, when Jesus saw their faith. Now, pause a moment there.

It was as if Jesus, with the man lying on the mat in front of him, Jesus looked up. Jesus looked up to the hole in the roof and he saw the men who had lowered their friend down look, looking down into the room.

Jesus saw their faith. And then Jesus worked. Jesus saw their faith.

[19:26] Then he turned to the man and he said to him, friend, your sins are forgiven. your sins are forgiven.

Now, wait a minute. They did not bring their friend to this rendezvous with the thought of his sins being forgiven, but rather with him being made well again so that he could walk.

But my friends, Jesus saw much deeper into that man's heart. he saw his greatest need was not to be made well and to walk again.

Great and all as that was. His greatest need rather was for his sin to be forgiven. Jesus saw that. His friends never saw it.

He saw it. And he said, friend, your sins are forgiven. Are yours? ask yourself this morning.

[20 : 37] It is not automatic. It doesn't just happen. We have got to come to God by faith. We have got to ask the Lord Jesus to take our sin away, to deal with it.

Have you done that? If you haven't, then that's what you need to do. To ask the Lord Jesus to remove your sin.

That's what Jesus did with this paralyzed man. And then, and then, Jesus did what they were hoping he would do.

You know, when we pray, we bring people into God's presence. When I pray for a missionary in South Africa, I mentioned that missionary's name, what that missionary is doing, what their situation is, what the problems are, what the challenges are in their work, I am actually bringing that missionary into God's presence.

Now, they actually took a man into God's presence. But when we pray, that is what we do. We bring people into God's presence.

[22 : 03] When we pray for people. I'm reading a book at the moment, which is an utterly remarkable book.

I've got it here with me. I've also got loads of copies in the hall downstairs. If you can cast your mind back 50 years, some of you can, I know everyone can't, cast your mind back to 1956.

What happened in 1956 in the Christian world? Can you remember? Five missionaries were martyred in Ecuador.

Now, I read all the books that came out at that time about that seeming tragedy. And I was deeply, deeply impressed and influenced by those books.

One of the five was called Nate Saint. And his son has written a book called The End of the Spear.

[23 : 21] Steve Saint. And he went back with his wife and children to work amongst the Oka Indians or the Wa'odani Indians.

And he was baptized, he and his sister, by two of the men who speared their father.

Someone said, you can't see God. Yes, I agree. But you can see the difference that God makes in someone's life.

I remember years ago in Inverness, walking into the YMCA next door to the Free North. And sitting on the steps of the YM, there was a young man drinking methylated spirits.

I don't know if you know what that does to someone's inside. He was drinking meth. then someone invited him to church.

[24 : 42] Today, if you were to go to Gretna, there in the Baptist church in Gretna, the minister is that man who was sitting on the steps.

The difference God makes in someone's life. These people lived to kill.

Their motto was kill your enemies before they kill you. And then you're likely to live longer. And this man, Steve Saint, and his wife and family went back to live and to work amongst these people.

And was actually baptized, he and his sister, by two of the men who committed that atrocity. It's an utterly staggering book.

I recommend it highly to you. And if you want to take a copy, take a copy. And on the table you'll find an envelope. You don't have to pay for it today. You can if you want, but if you would rather not, just take it.

[25 : 53] And you can send the money tomorrow, or the next day. That family moved out to Ecuador by faith. And they saw a consolidation in God's work.

You say it was a tragedy what happened in 1956? Humanly speaking, yes. In God's economy, no. Because that was not a mistake in God's economy.

Today, as a direct result of what happened in 1956, there is a church growing, flourishing amongst the Yorca Indians, reckoned to be some of the most savage people, stone-aged people on the face of the earth.

who, when they make a spear, and they make the point of the spear, they make a notch at the lower end of the point, so that when the spear is pushed in, the point breaks off inside the victim.

And the point, of course, is covered with poison. poison. And that family went back to live with them. Can you believe that? Could you do that?

[27 : 18] God is looking for people with faith like that. That's why I so highly recommend a book like that. It will cost you, you have to buy it, but it's challenging to read.

What God does when he transforms people's lives. I've never seen God, but I have seen the effect of God's working. These men brought their friend to Jesus by faith.

Jesus forgave him his sins, made him well again. And we read at the end of that passage, everyone was amazed, gave praise to God.

They were filled with awe and said, we have seen remarkable things today. And when God is at work, you see remarkable things. No matter how good life has been to you, no matter how well you may have got on, you still need God.

You cannot write God out of your life. Many people do. many people do. But every one of us needs to reckon, if not now, later, with God.

[28 : 47] Much better now. God was pleased with Enoch because he was a man who walked by faith.

In fact, he was so pleasing to God that God took him. He never saw death because he pleased God. When these men brought their friend to Jesus, when Jesus looked up and saw, it didn't say he saw their faces.

It says he saw their faith. was like a key that turned in a lock and opened the door. Because of their faith, Jesus worked.

Isn't it remarkable? There are millions of people across the face of the earth who have never heard the name of Jesus. I don't often do sums from the pulpit, but let's try and do one together just in your mind.

If you go to church once every Sunday, by the end of the year, you will have been in church 52 times. That's right, isn't it?

[30 : 08] Because there's 52 weeks in the year. If you go to church twice on a Sunday, every Sunday by the end of the Sunday, the end of the year, you will have been in church 104 times.

If you go to the midweek Bible study prayer meeting, and I hope you do, that's three times a week. At the end of the year, you will have been in church 156 times.

And if you on that basis go to church for 10 years, you will have been in church 1560 times. But you, like me, have been going to church for a lot longer than 10 years.

Let's say 40 years. The end of the 40th year on the basis of three times a week, you will have been in church and listening to God's word 6,240 times.

And as I understand the world today, there are millions, 1,400, 1,600, million people, 1.6 billion people who have never once heard the name of Jesus.

[31 : 35] And I have saving thee over 6,000 times. Does it seem right that we should be so favored when there are millions longing to hear from God, but nobody going to tell them?

This young man went, I haven't reached the end yet. I don't know what happens at the end. But when I look back at what happened to cause this book to be written, I just wonder.

God does amazing things. God speaks to his children. God challenges us to do things for him. I wonder, will we be willing to do what God is challenging us to do?

As he said, go into all the world and preach the gospel and lo, I am with you always. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.

I will not turn my back on you. I will not turn God hear prayer. Can you think of an example when you prayed and God answered?

[33 : 13] If I were to ask you personally, give me an example of you praying, God hearing and answering your prayer, I wonder what you would say.

I think we would hear some remarkable stories. Let me close with one such. I was working with my wife and family in Burkina Faso in West Africa.

In the village of Malba where we were working, there was an epidemic of meningitis and children were dying like flies. It was horrible.

A child could be fit and well at eight o'clock in the morning and at three o'clock in the afternoon. Dead.

Shocking. We went to church this Sunday morning and going in the door, one of the elders said, would you please come to my house after the service and pray for my daughter.

[34 : 33] She's very ill. So after the service, we went to that man's house. He took us into the house, into a room. There was nothing in the room. No chair, no furniture, nothing but a bundle of

rags lying in the corner.

And I asked the elder, well, where is this child? Well, he said, just wait. And the father went over to the bundle of rags.

He lifted the bundle of rags. and there inside was his daughter.

As soon as I saw her, I said to the elder, we're too late. We can't do anything here. The elder said something to me never forgot me.

He said, it's never too late for God. So we prayed, and afterwards we went away, and I went home.

[35 : 59] I would have to say that I had no faith that God could do anything for that little night.

two days later, the father, whose name was Abraham, came with his little daughter, hand in hand. She was skipping and dancing. God heard. Despite my lack of faith, that elder had faith that I didn't have.

God answered that prayer. And let that little girl never look back from that day onwards. Have faith in God.

And you will see remarkable things happen. bear in mind, God is looking for people who will walk with Him.

[37 : 20] People who will be men and women and young people full of faith, determined to do God's will, whatever the cost.

May God help us so to do. let's pray. Let's pray. Our Father and our God, we thank you for your word.

Thank you, Lord, that your word is as a sharp two-edged sword that pierces divides. And Father, we pray that your word would continue to linger on and speak to us.

That no matter what we have in life, that we will recognize that without you, we have nothing. Help us, Lord, to make our peace with you.

And help us, Lord, to go out into this world to make a difference and to bring people into your presence.

[38 : 45] Grant it, Lord, we pray. May we be willing to do your will because we ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and for his sake.

Amen. And now may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit rest upon us and remain with us both now and forever more.

Amen.