

Hebrews

Pleasing God

Hebrews 11:5-6

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INTRODUCTION:

There are at least four different men in the Bible named Enoch. They are all found in Genesis. They are in Genesis 4:17, 5:18, 25:4, and 46:9. Our Enoch is found in 5:18. Depending on your translation the name may be spelled "Hanok". The only difference is one of English spelling. Our Enoch was the great-great-great-great grandson of Adam.

Genesis 5:18-24 (NASB95)

¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. ²² Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 11:5-6 (NASB95)

⁵ By faith Enoch was **taken up** so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Prayer

You will notice that verse 5 gives us a little more detail than what we read in Genesis.

This being “**taken up**” is what Enoch is most famous for. Only two people in the Bible are said to have been chosen by God to escape death. They are Enoch and Elijah. Enoch appears to have been given this privilege due to being a man who **walked** with God and **pleased** God. The scriptures do not elaborate on why Enoch was taken away without experiencing death. The most common assumption is so that he could serve as one of the **two witnesses**, alongside Elijah, in the end times.

Revelation 11:3-8 (NASB95)

³ And I will grant *authority* to my **two witnesses**, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them,

fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. ⁶ These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

⁷ When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Moses and Elijah are possibilities because of the miracles that John says the witnesses will perform. Enoch and Elijah are also seen as possibilities because of the unique circumstances surrounding their exit from the world. They, as far as we know, are the only two individuals whom God has taken directly to heaven without experiencing death. A verse that leans toward Enoch and Elijah is found in Hebrews 9:27.

Hebrews 9:27b (NASB95)

²⁷ ...it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

The fact that neither Enoch nor Elijah has yet experienced death seems to qualify them for the job of the two witnesses, who will be killed when their job is done. In addition, both Enoch and Elijah were prophets who pronounced God's judgment.

Jude 1:14-15

¹⁴ *It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Regardless of who the two witnesses are, the main thing that is being presented here is that we should be seeking to follow Enoch's example by being men and women who walk faithfully with God and seek to please Him with our lives.

We should learn three things from these verses:

I. Strive to Please God.

If you love someone, you aim to please him or her. The foremost commandment is that we strive to love God first.

Mark 12:30 (NASB95)

³⁰ and you **shall** love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

This is **not** an optional emotion. It is impossible to obey that commandment without **seeking** to please God. Note two things in this regard:

A. Pleasing God begins on the heart (or thought) level.

We can put on a false front before people by being nice on the surface, while in our hearts we really do not care. But God knows our every thought, and so we cannot deceive Him!

Even if we fulfill a list of religious duties or live outwardly moral lives, God judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. So if you want to please God, you must judge all personal sin on the thought level and strive to make all of your thoughts be obedient to Christ.

Mark 7:20-23 (NASB95)

²⁰ And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

God condemns those who honor Him with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him. This is essential: **Aim to please God with your thought life and your emotional life!**

B. Pleasing God requires consistently drawing near to Him and seeking Him.

Verse 6 mentions the one "who **comes to God**". "Comes to" derives from the same Greek word that is translated "draw near" in 4:16, where we are exhorted to "**draw near with confidence to the throne of grace**". In 7:25, the author says that Jesus "is able also to save forever those who **draw near to God through Him**". In 10:1, he states that the Old Testament sacrifices could never "**make perfect those who draw near**". And there are others.

Drawing near to God and seeking Him are deliberate, intentional activities. You do not accidentally draw near to the Holy One. No one ever seeks God apart from God's first choosing and calling of that person.

Romans 8:28 (NASB95)

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

But once God has called you to salvation and you have responded in faith to His call, you must exert deliberate effort and intention to seek the Lord. So our priority and aim in life should be to please God from the heart! To do so, we must consistently draw near to Him and seek Him.

Verse 6 also mentions two qualities that are essential in order to please God. They are defined by the words "**impossible**" and "**must**".

II. Faith is Essential to Please God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NASB95)

⁶ And without faith it is **impossible** to please *Him*, for he who comes to God **must** believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Faith is **not** an optional practice if you desire to please God. It is **impossible** to please God without faith. And if you wish to please God you **must** believe that God is and the He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

We know this on a human level. If someone does not believe you or questions your integrity, you will not be pleased with that person. In effect, they are calling you a liar. We

do not find it pleasing when the truth has been spoken and they, in essence, call you a liar.

How much more does it displease the God of truth, who cannot lie, when we call Him a liar by doubting His word! What could be more insulting? What could be more arrogant than to imply that we know more than God does? When we do not trust Him, we are in effect saying, "God, You are wrong and I am right!" If we insist on our worldly knowledge over God's righteous knowledge, He will give you over to a depraved mind. So, if we want to please God, we must learn what faith means, and live by faith on a daily basis.

The author mentions two aspects of God-pleasing faith:

A. Faith must believe in the existence of God.

Why does the author start with believing in God's existence with Jews, who obviously believed that? For one thing, his readers were under the imminent threat of persecution. When you have done what is right and get persecuted for it, the devil comes to you with doubts about God. He whispers in your ear, "You repented of your sins and trusted in God, but look what has happened to you now! If there were a God in heaven, would He let you be treated in this way?"

When the author says that we must believe that "God is," he means, "We must believe that God is exactly who His Word reveals Him to be." Sinful people cannot know the living and true God apart from His revealing Himself to them. To believe in God "as you conceive Him to be" is to believe in an idol: a god of your own making and imagination. We must believe in the God who is not only the God of love, but also of judgment, because that is how He has revealed Himself. He is not only a God of mercy and kindness, but also of holiness and wrath. So when the author says that we must believe that God is, he is saying, "Believe in the God who reveals Himself in His Word."

You may not like the trials or the teaching, but where else are you going to go? The world certainly offers no satisfying answers! When some of Christ's followers started to walk away Jesus asked His disciples if they were going to walk away also. Here is Peter's answer to Him.

John 6:68-69 (NASB95)

68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

If you turn your back on God in times of trials, you have just robbed yourself of your only source of hope and comfort! Faith holds on, believing that **God is!**

B. Faith must believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

This has to do with God's goodness or justice, as well as His power. In times of trial, if Satan cannot get you to doubt God's existence, he will try to get you to doubt God's goodness, His fairness, or His power. "If God loves you and cares about you, why is this terrible trial happening to you? Maybe God cares, but He cannot do anything about it." Faith takes a stand against this temptation, believing, "God **will** reward me because I have sought Him. God **does** love me and care for me, even though I am suffering. God **is** able to deliver me, if that is His divine will."

Saving faith is not just mentally assenting to the promise that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you have eternal life. It is true that you must agree with God's promise, but faith is more than agreeing. It is also relying personally on Christ as your only hope of heaven. You turn from relying on your own good works as the basis of your standing with God. You believe God's promise that the one who **trusts** in Jesus will have eternal life. If you do not have this foundation, you will **not** be able to believe God in times of severe trials.

Christ Himself merits our salvation and all spiritual blessings. We deserve nothing from God but judgment. But in His grace, He offers mercy and full pardon to the one who trusts in the merits of Christ. So, make sure that you are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. Understand that you do not in any way merit salvation by your faith, but that faith is simply the channel through which God's blessings flow.

We must keep in mind that the rewards of faith are reserved for eternity, not necessarily in this life. Enoch only lived for 365 years, which is very long by today's standards, but when compared to the life span of his generation, he has by far the shortest life of all of the pre-flood patriarchs. His father, Jared, lived 962 years. His son, Methuselah, set the record at 969 years. Yet Enoch, who is noted for his godliness, only lived about a third as long as they did! This shows us that faith's reward is not necessarily a long life on earth, but eternal life with God in heaven. Faith looks to God for the reward of eternal life in heaven, not for the good life here and now.

So far we have seen that our primary aim in life should be to please God, and that faith is essential to please Him. Finally,

III. Faith is a Daily Walk that Extends Over a Lifetime.

Faith is a daily walk that extends over a lifetime. Genesis does not mention faith in connection with Enoch, but it does say that he "**walked**" with God. Since it is impossible to please God without faith, it follows that Enoch walked by faith. His walk of faith during his lifetime obtained God's testimony that he was pleasing to Him. We must walk by faith with God on earth if we expect to dwell with Him forever in heaven.

To walk with God means that our lives are **in step with God**, yielded in obedience to Him and headed in the direction He chooses. Walking also implies **intimacy** and **fellowship**. Walking with a friend is a time to talk, to get to know one another, and to share the things that are happening in your lives. Walking with God is a daily process of growing more intimate with Him as you share everything in your life with Him and learn more of His ways.

Of course, you have to do your own walking! Someone else cannot do your walking for you. Just as a physical exercise program requires **discipline**, so spiritual walking also requires discipline.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASB95)

⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

You have to take the initiative, the time, and the effort that is required to walk with God. If you do **not** make frequent appointments to spend time alone with God, it will not happen. If you do **not** make an effort to **read His Word** and apply it to your life, then you are **not**

walking with Him. If you are **not memorizing His promises** and applying them to the various situations you face, you are **not** walking by faith. If you have trusted in Christ as Savior, but you have grown lazy and are not walking with Him, then **get up and get back on the path!** Faith is a daily dependence on God, step by step, that continues over a lifetime.

CONCLUSION:

Our **first** objective, of course, is to please God but **second** to that is that we should try to please people. There is a Godly way that this must be done.

We should not be needlessly offensive.

1 Corinthians 10:32-33 (NASB95)

³² Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; ³³ just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

We should be gracious, kind, and not quarrelsome, even when we must correct those in error.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NASB95)

²⁴ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

We should seek to please others in order to build them up in Christ.

Romans 15:2 (NASB95)

² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

Sometimes pleasing God inevitably means that we may have to displease some people that are opposed to God. This is much more important than pleasing people.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NASB95)

⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

If we please everyone else, but God is ultimately displeased with our lives, **woe to us!** On the other hand, if we offend others, but God is finally pleased, we will enter into His eternal joy. Enoch pleased God so much that God took him straight to heaven so that he did not see death.

A life of faith pleases God!

What a Day That Will Be!