

**Hebrews 11:5-6**  
**(Genesis 5:1-32)**  
**“By Faith Enoch Walked with God”**

**Introduction**

Are you surprised that I read through an entire genealogy for our first Scripture lesson? After all, the genealogies are where we usually catch up on our through-the-Bible-in-a-year reading plans. You can cover a genealogy or two in less than a minute. The problem is, of course, that we risk missing the lessons imbedded in these family trees.

Take, for example, this rather tedious family tree from Adam to Noah, from the creation to the great flood. The only remarkable thing that jumps out is their extraordinarily long lives. Each person listed was born, lived a number of decades, then had his first child, then lived a number of centuries, and finally died. Nothing else seemed worth recording in God’s Word, except that each had a child who would continue the family line.

This our worst fear: living a long life, working each day as creatively and energetically as we can do, and when we die having an obituary that reads: John Wood, born in 1948, lived twenty-nine years and had a daughter, Rachel. After that, he lived another fifty-six years and had a son and another daughter. Altogether, John lived eighty-five years and then he died. In 912 years, I’m sure that Seth did something else interesting besides father Enosh, but here’s the thing: it wasn’t of eternal significance, so was not worth recording in God’s book. Yet this is the weary tale of Adam’s descendants, with one significant exception: Enoch.

Seven generations from Adam we find Enoch of whom it is written twice in the scope of three verses that he “walked with God.” If we miss this, we have missed the great theological lesson of this entire genealogy: the only thing worth recording about us in God’s book, besides the fact of our having children, is that we walked with God. This is what God created humanity to do, to walk in intimate, loving friendship with him. Apart from this, all of our greatest achievements lose their meaning in the light of eternity. If we want our lives to have eternal significance, and to be suffused with God’s power and blessed by his favor, then it is crucial that we walk with him through the grace he has given.

But how are we to do that? How can a mere human walk in intimate fellowship with God? This chapter is written to Christians facing persecution in order to help them to stand strong, not to turn back, not to throw away their confidence, and the way to stand strong is through faith in God’s promises. So here we have the second picture of one whose faith endured to the end, one who was commended by God, and we look together at how he believed God’s Word, how he sought and gained God’s approval, and how he continues even today to testify to God’s justice and mercy.

## Body

### 1. By faith Enoch believed God's Word.

Understanding exactly what it was that Enoch believed requires once again understanding the meaning of these Hebrew names. Remember that written Hebrew only contained consonants, and the vowels had to be added by the reader according to the context. Vowel marks (called "points") were added many centuries after the books of the Bible were written, during the middle ages, to help students who did not speak Hebrew pronounce words correctly.

The name, Methuselah, is often given vowels that come from two words, *math* meaning man, and *shelah* meaning weapon, yielding a name that means "man of the weapon." However, there is nothing in the story that refers to weapons, or in any way explains that name. But another way of interpreting the name, simply by supplying different vowels, yields a very different name with a very different meaning. If, rather than *math* one reads *muth* meaning die, and rather than *shelah* one reads *shalah* meaning sent forth, then the name means "When he dies, a sending forth," or (as James Boice has translated the name) "When he dies, it shall come."

Now why is that reading of the name significant? When I was a young man, I remember thinking of this genealogy with its long lives, and wondering – if I calculated them out – whether several of these long-lived folk wouldn't turn out to have still been alive long after the flood was supposed to have drowned everyone not in the ark. So I made my chart, and much to my surprise, all had died before the Lord closed Noah and family in the ark and sent the waters upon the earth. Except that Methuselah died the same year as the flood and I wondered if the old boy had died doing the backstroke.

When we read the story in the light of the meaning of Methuselah's name, its meaning becomes clear. Enoch lived sixty-five years. Then he had a son, and God revealed to him both his coming judgment and yet also his great mercy in withholding his wrath until Enoch's son had died. In naming his son Methuselah, "When he dies, it will come," Enoch demonstrated his faith in God's word revealed to him. From that day on, Enoch walked with God. And when at last Methuselah died, God poured out the judgment he had prophesied to Enoch.

### 2. By faith Enoch sought and gained God's approval.

Where do we see this? In several ways: We see it in Enoch's belief in God demonstrated in the naming of his son. We see it in his becoming a preacher of righteousness to his generation. Where do I get this? From the little letter

of Jesus' brother, Jude, found just before the book of Revelation. Jude writes, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his holy ones to execute judgment ...'" (Jude 14-15). So, according to the Scripture, God had, indeed, revealed to Enoch the coming judgment and Enoch did not merely keep it to himself and his family, but proclaimed it to all who would listen, warning them to flee God's coming wrath, to flee to him for grace.

But, above all, we see Enoch's faith in the transformation that took place in his life. Until he was sixty-five, he seems to have been like everyone else, simply living his life, going his own way. But from the time that God revealed to him his wrath and his mercy, Enoch walked with God. This is more than occasional fellowship, a Sunday kind of religion. This is faith lived out, a new way of living consciously in God's presence. This is what Christ offers us by grace through faith: Not merely a new way of thinking, but a new way of living, of knowing God in Christ and of walking with him in the power of his Spirit. This is available to you and me today through the gospel of Christ. In Christ, we are made like Enoch, those who find the way opened before them into the very presence of the living God. Because he walked with God, we read that he did not see death but was taken in the midst of his years into the presence of God. In him, we have a picture of those alive when at last Christ comes and consummates human history and takes to himself those who have walked with him in time that they might walk with him in eternity.

### **3. By faith Enoch continues to testify to God's justice and mercy.**

What does Enoch continue to say to us? He tells this same story of God's justice and mercy, reminding us why he named his son Methuselah, warning of God's judgment of unrepentant, persistent rebellion and sin, and prophesying of God's mercy. How was God's mercy displayed? Why was Methuselah the oldest man who ever lived? Because of God's mercy, giving humanity another millennia to repent and turn to him for grace. Thus, Peter writes, "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come ..." (2 Peter 3:9).

## **Conclusion**

What of your obituary? What of mine? What will they say? More to the point, what would God say of us if our lives were recorded in one of Scripture's genealogies? Let's not let the world around us shape our view of what is significant, of what is of ultimate worth and value. Let's walk with God, by grace through faith, that we may enjoy his friendship now and his gracious presence for all eternity.

© John M. Wood, all rights reserved