

BY FAITH, WE ARE TAKEN FROM THIS EARTH

Hebrews 11:5,6

TEXT: *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.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Have you ever had to "break the news?" I was just a young teenager when I answered the phone to hear someone tell me that my uncle had died. He was my mother's brother and was only about 52 years old. Mom and Dad had gone to Grand Rapids, my mother's favorite shopping place. When they came home, my mother was really in a good mood. She had actually found a dress that she liked. That was a rare event. So I did not have the courage to "break the news" that, out of ten siblings, their oldest brother was dead. So I quietly told Dad. Let Dad break the news to his wife.

Scripture doesn't tell us how God broke the news to the family of Enoch: *Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away.* Whenever you read Genesis 5, the temptation to read it quickly may cause us to miss some amazing revelations. When you read it, you will note that there is a list of ancient men who were born, lived a number of years before they began to beget children, and then after having sons and daughters they lived for a relatively long period of time and then, they died. One exception is Enoch: *When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. And after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died. 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.* Ge 5. That's it! Nothing more about Enoch until the inspired Apostle wrote this famous Chapter 11 to the Hebrews: *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.* Put the two texts together, and you have this scenario: Mrs. Enoch, married to her man who is only 365 years old (only a third of the life expectancy of that time), waits for him to come home from work. No Enoch. "Where's Dad?" she asks her oldest son, Methuselah. "I don't know! He was at work today in the fields!" The search party is organized, but, as the Bible says: *he could not be found, because God had taken him away...* Enoch was no more among them, *because God had taken him away.* Did it matter to Enoch's family that their husband, father, grandfather, *did not experience death...?* He was gone!

Does it matter to any of us that our loved ones DO experience death? We might say: "That's how he would have wanted to go..." But the result is the same: They are gone.

What is most important, however, is what Scripture says about this. That we know and are certain of these things, as the Bible says about Enoch: *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.* The account of Enoch is for us to consider this day, so that each of our lives might end here with the same legacy: BY FAITH, WE ARE TAKEN FROM THIS EARTH We will not experience death; We will "walk with God" until he calls us.

No one who "walks with God" will ever experience death. Jesus once said, moments before He raised a very dead man back to life: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* Jn 11 From our Savior and Creator/Redeemer's own mouth, we have this assurance that what we call "death" really isn't death. What we call "death" was often referred to by Jesus Himself with the euphemism, "SLEEP." He once told the crowds that a dead girl was only sleeping. Laughter penetrated their grief when He said this because they knew what death was, and their little girl was DEAD. But when Jesus said, *Little girl, I say to you, get up!* Mk 5 everyone SHUT UP, and they suddenly realized that what the Lord says about death is true -- it cannot touch those who walk with Him! *By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death...* Nor will ANYONE who puts their

faith and trust in Jesus as the Savior of the world.

And yet, even Enoch's story is enshrouded with the sad commentary that all of us are used to hearing: *...he could not be found, because God had taken him away ...* and that Old Testament Scripture which says: *Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.* And then before and after come the words that are appended to the story of Enoch's fathers and his sons: *Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.* What is this painful thing we call "death" that leaves us alone and empty, that leaves us here with the one who *is no more because the Lord has taken* them away? It is sin. *The wages of sin is death...*

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Ro 6 The night before our Lord died on the cross to pay the price for these "wages of sin" he said to his disciples: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* Jn 14 Can't you just see Jesus pointing to them and saying these words? "I'm coming back for you! One by one I will come for you and take you to be with me!" Do you see the bread and wine on this altar? Consider these elements to be our Lord pointing to each and every one of us with the words, Take and eat! This is for you for the forgiveness of your sins! And so I am coming back for you one day soon to take you to be with me!

Jesus' coming for each of us could be at any time. What is most important is that we are ready and waiting for him as did Enoch. By faith, Enoch walked with God. He did not experience death. His life on earth was a "walk with God."

The Bible says: *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.* How do you do that? Was your week a week that gave glory to God? Did you walk with God last night, when you celebrated your weekend? Does your church attendance demonstrate a close walk with God? Have the footsteps of your walk with God led you to your Bible to read and study His Word? Would you bet your life, your salvation, on what you are doing at the moment when the Lord takes you from this world? Will you be in a bar, a casino, on the golf course on Sunday morning? Will you be sitting in church thinking about what someone is wearing as they go to communion? Will your mind be wandering as you pray the Lord's prayer? If the Lord should call you right now, will you be able to remember what your pastor just said?

What terrifying thoughts these are! For it clearly says: *anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* Here we do fail, and we readily confess this truth! But with Enoch it was God's commendation on the basis of his faith in Jesus. Do not forget the first part of that same passage: *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.* Enoch's walk with God was a walk of faith in the Savior. Others might have said, "Oh, Enoch, you're a good man, a preacher of holiness..." but he would turn to the Lord and with terror in his heart pray, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." And because God had promised mercy and forgiveness through a Savior that Enoch believed was coming, he was *commended as one who pleased God...* Our walk with God is not that we have walked the "straight and narrow," but that Jesus has walked the way of the cross to pay for the sins of all humanity. This promise Enoch believed, for by that faith the Lord declared him forgiven!

There are some whose WALK WITH GOD is more noticeable than others. When such good people die, especially if they die relatively young, people scratch their heads and wonder why. They question God about the death of the good and the innocent. However, no one would classify the life that the criminal on the cross next to Jesus lived as anything God-pleasing. Who would have considered his life a "walk with God?" And yet his final confession has gone down in history as a record of comfort and hope. We might say that while his walk with God was short, it was for us the sweetest gospel lesson.

But we are not criminals about to be crucified. You are believers in Jesus, and your days on this earth, be they many or relatively few, are your walk of faith, and your WALK WITH GOD. While ours will never be recorded in Scripture, may they leave a legacy of our faith that will be memorable in the hearts and minds of those who will miss us when we are gone. Amen.