

Enoch Walked with God

By Thomas Boston

"And Enoch walked-with God, and he was not; for God took him." Gen 5:24.

It is too evident, that the generation we live in is in a declining condition; that professors are few, but real Christians fewer by far. Religion with many is turned to be the object of their ridicule; and among those that own it, to merely dry and sapless notions, for the most part. Few now are added to the church, or brought over out of the devil's camp. True godliness languishes, and serious experimental religion wears out. Therefore, I would press religion in the life and power of it, on those that would save themselves from this untoward generation. Here shines the brightest star in the patriarchal age, which having given light to the lower world for a time, was afterwards translated into a higher sphere, and passed out of the world in as an usual a manner as he lived in it. For as men live in the world, so ordinarily they go out of it. There is a long account here, where nothing is marked but names and numbers, men's living and dying, till we come to Enoch, whose singular piety is recorded. Observe. The life of man is for the most part a vain thing, of which, by the sleeping of some, and the slumbering of others, nothing remains remarkable, but that they lived and died. But close walking with God serves another and better purpose, than to cause one just to fill up room in the world for a while. From the short history of these antediluvian patriarchs, we may learn one lesson, that will serve us all our days, viz. That we must die, how long soever we live. It is reported of one, that by hearing this chapter read in the church, he got such an impression of his own death, that he turned religious, that he might die well. But from the history of Enoch, we may learn how to live well in this world.

In the words there is remarked a real preaching that was given to the old world by Enoch ; a life- preaching; for his conversation preached to them, what religion was, and what was their great duty, viz. walking with God; a removal-preaching, (we cannot say his death preached, for he did not die; but his passage out of this world preached), that there is another and a better life with God in another world, both for soul and body. And this is no doubt marked, to shew us the mercy

bestowed on that generation, that the godly in it might be encouraged, and the wicked left without excuse, while such a bright star shone so fair in that dark age. For it is observable, that his walking with God is twice told, once, ver.22, and here again in the text, in conjunction with his happy removal, giving us a compendious body of divinity, written for the use of that age especially, (not excluding others), in this man's life and translation out of the world. So that God left not himself without a witness in that degenerate age. They not only heard, but saw in him, the power of godliness, and the reward of it too.

Observe that men will not only have the best instructions and warnings they get from the world, but those they get from the examples of holy men, to answer for in the day of accounts. There are silent preachers, who yet speak home, as Noah, who "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world;" Heb. 11:7; and the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the south, of whom, our Lord says, Matth.12: 41, 42, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Examples of a holy life, if they do not lead spectators to heaven, will drive them more deeply into destruction.

Though it is charitably thought, that all the patriarchs were good men, yet surely the age wherein Enoch lived was a very degenerate and profane age, Methuselah his son died the same year the deluge came on. He lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. Enoch walked with God three hundred years. So, from his translation there were six hundred and sixty-nine to the deluge. Of that they got one hundred and twenty years' warning of the deluge; so that to that time there were but five hundred and forty-nine years. There were none of those here mentioned but they lived more than seven hundred years. And God's Spirit had been long striving with the generation before the last hundred and twenty years - So that we may well reckon that many of those who lived in Enoch's days, were of those God's Spirit had so long striven with, and that were swept away by the deluge; and consequently that it was a very degenerate and profane age he lived in, wherein men had come the length to talk and act boldly against the God that

made them, as appears from Jude 14, 15, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Observe, Be the times never so bad, it is men's own fault they are bad too. Eminent holiness, and intimate communion with God, may be attained in the worst of times. While that generation was running to ruin, Enoch walked with God.

However men grow worse and worse, heaven is still as good and bountiful as ever; "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." God's door still stands open, though the generation conspire to trouble it very little for supply. Our Lord will never shut his door upon his people, because they are few; but it shall stand open as long as there is one that hath business in his house; "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my word do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

Those that mind for heaven, must row against the stream always; and if they do not, they will be called down the stream in the best of times; for, says our Lord "From the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If people will ply the throne of grace, and resolutely set themselves against the epidemical disease of their day, they may keep lively in the midst of a dead crew, though with much difficulty, as our Lord observes; "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments,"

The badness of the times affords matter to excite God's people the more to their duty, and close walking with God. The profaneness and formality of those they live among, and the dishonour done to God thereby, should be like oil to the flame of their holy love and zeal, as it was to David; "It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. Therefore, I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." The prospect of what must needs be the issue

of such apostasy of a generation may also quicken them; even as one is the more concerned to see to his own safety, that the rest of the family are pulling down the house about their own ears; as was the case with Noah, who, among a very wicked and abandoned people, had this character, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."

Because as the Lord shews himself most concerned for the welfare of those who are most concerned for his honor; so the worse the times are, they that cleave to him closely may expect to fare the better, as Noah also did, when the Lord said to him, "Come thou, and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,". Moses never had a more glorious manifestation of God, than at the time when the Israelites had fallen into the idolatry of the golden calf, and God was about to destroy the whole nation.

Learn then that those who keep not up communion with God, in the life and power of religion, in evil times, are in God's account joined and embarked with the generation of his wrath; and be who they will, they will smart with the rest for it, though they put not forth their hands to the notorious abominations of the times they live in. Hence is that threatening, "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." It is a heavy word that sets formal hypocrites and profane wretches on one and the same bottom; "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

Bad example with its influence will not excuse people before the Lord. While it is no comfort to go to hell with company, there can be no safety in following a multitude to do evil. What! will men think that because the conspiracy against God and holiness is strong, therefore they may join in it; that because serious godliness is going over the brae, therefore they may give it a push? But we will be to them those who give an unhallowed touch to God's cart when it is at the halting.

To be complaining of the evil of the times, sighing and going backward in religion, is a fruitless unavailing complaint, neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to one's self. For at no time does religion consist in talking, but in walking with God. And that is but to condemn ourselves out of our own mouths.

Let us be exhorted to study the power and reality of religion in these dregs of time. Let us draw the nearer to God, that we see so many going far from him. And as we would not bring the wrath of God on ourselves, let us neither join with a profane generation, nor continue on our lees with a formal dead-hearted generation, strangers to the power of godliness.

Consider Enoch's holy life in this world. "Enoch walked with God." The Spirit of God puts a special remark on this. It is Enoch's honour, that he did not walk as others did, after their lusts. Yea, he walked more holily and closely with God, than other good men of that age. God takes special notice of those who are best when others are worst, We see this in the instance of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom: likewise of those mentioned Ezek. 9, concerning whom the Lord said, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof;" and those taken notice of Malachi 3 "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that reared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

To be thus argues an ingenuous spirit, a love to the Lord for himself, and a love to his way for its likeness to himself; that the soul is carried thus to it against the stream of the corruption of the age. And it argues not only grace, but the strength of grace. It must be strong faith, love, etc. that so much bear out against the strong temptation to apostasy, arising from the combination of a generation against God and his way. To be holy when the helps to a holy life are least in the world, argues the vigour of grace in the heart.

Labour ye then to be best while others are worst, to confront the impiety of the generation wherein ye live. Do they indulge themselves in licentiousness? be ye the more strict and holy in your walk. Do they take up with mere externals in religion? strive ye the rather to get into the inner court, to taste and see, and here to have communion with God. It is the honour of a professor of religion, to outgo others in the matter of close walking with God. God himself is glorious in holiness. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. The liker he is to God, the more

honourable is he. This lets us see what would be a blessed emulation among professors, viz. that we were striving who should be most tender, holy, and circumspect. O that that were brought in, in the room of all our strifes and contests about practices and opinions which eat out the life of religion in our day! But alas! real holiness is little regarded, and therefore little striven for. It must be a godless-like mark in any person, to have the serpentine grudge rise in their breasts against others, as they see them eminent for holy and tender walking. These are the person's most beloved and honoured of God; and it looks devilish-like to hate them, and have one's heart rise against them, for that very reason for which God loves them.

There was another of the name of Enoch descended from Cain, who had a city called after his name. Immortality is desired of all; and because men cannot stave off death, they follow after a shadow of immortality, that at least their name may live when they are gone. Therefore that has been an ancient custom, for men to call their lands after their own names. How much better was it with this Enoch, that took that course to get on him the name of the city of God, which Christ promises to write on all his people? The city called by the name of the other Enoch was destroyed by the deluge, and is now unknown; but the city of God lasts still, and will last forever. True piety is the best way to honour, even to true honour. For "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," when "the memory of the wicked shall rot." Enoch signifies dedicated, initiated, instructed. His life answered his name, for he lived as one devoted to the Lord. Observe. It is the duty of those devoted to God by their godly parents, to devote themselves to the Lord. And where grace comes in with good education, it ordinarily makes men famous in their generation, and signally serviceable to God. He was the seventh from Adam, and a prophet, who foretold the last judgment, even in that early age of the church; Jude 14, above cited. He was like Noah, a preacher of righteousness in his day; and like John Baptist, a burning and shining light, burning in his conversation, shining in his doctrine. They that live near God, are most likely to be acquaint with his secrets, and to know most of his mind; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

Enoch lived like a man of another world; a life of close communion with God. He was really religious; not only religious before men, but before God. Observe. Religion lies inwardly. We are that really which we are before the Lord; "He is a Jew which is one inwardly." He was eminently religious. Men may attain to eminency in religion, in very bad times, by putting the Lord always before them.

He was; a spiritual traveller through the world; he "walked." Whereas it is said of others, they "lived;" it is said of Enoch, "He walked with God." He looked on himself as a pilgrim and stranger in this present world; and did not sit down in it to take up his abode on this side Jordan. They that would live a life of communion with God, must live as pilgrims in this world, as travellers through it to a better country. Their hearts must be loosed from the world, bidding an eternal farewell to it as a portion. The heart gone from God naturally sits down on the creature, to suck the sap of it, and to pursue it as its chief good. Now, the first step to the souls thriving, is to lift the heart from the creature, and once fairly to give up with the vain world. They must be fixed on the better country. They must look to the land that is afar off, resolutely aiming to be there, and therefore habitually keeping it in their eye, as the mark they desire to hit; Thus, we shall be heavenly in the frame and disposition of our spirits.

They must keep death much in their view, the passage out of this world into the other; "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." See what a familiarity Job had contracted with it; "I have said to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." This is the way to wean our hearts from the world, and to stir us up to converse much with another world. They must beware of dipping deep in things of this life, but go through the world lightly, like travelers, who serve themselves with a passing view of those parts they go through; But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The reason is, because the world is one of the great causes of contention and quarrel betwixt God and the soul. And so far as it gets in betwixt God and us, it

causes an eclipse of the light of the Lord's countenance. As ever ye would live a life of communion with God, live as pilgrims in this world. The manna never fell from heaven in the wilderness, till the provision brought from Egypt was spent and done. Deny yourselves to this world, if ye would have the taste of things of a better world. When the vessels of your hearts are emptied of the love of the world, the oil of grace will run. Note the company Enoch kept while he was in the way; "He walked with God." He did not walk with the generation he lived in; did not go on with the multitude, thinking it enough to do as they did; but he "walked with God," being a follower of the Lord, keeping his eye on him. True religion makes one give up with the way of the world, and set God before them for all. It is the way of strangers from God to follow the course of this world. They that mind for heaven, must be nonconformists to the world. They must be practical separatists from the world, in life and conversation; as it was with Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

See what a graceless-like thing it is for people to content themselves to be like neighbours and others. Ah, Sirs, though all the world should approve you, if God condemn you, what will it avail? They that pin their faith or holiness on other people's sleeve, have neither faith nor holiness, and will never see heaven.

See the necessity of a religion beyond the reach of the common gang of the world. Ye must not satisfy yourselves with the religion that most part do; but press forward to leave them behind you, because they do not walk with God.

Note his constancy in the way of the Lord; he "walked incessantly" as the original signifies. He did not take his religion by fits and starts, as many do, but kept a constant course of it. ver. 22 tells us, he walked with God three hundred years, all the time he lived after he begat Methuselah. Though perhaps he was a good man while he lived single in his young days, yet his last days were his best days. His greatest eminency for piety was in the days of his married life; while his family was increasing, his soul was increasing too. A married state is a state of life very consistent with the soul's flourishing in religion.

How unreasonable, then, is that excuse, which goes mighty far with the world; "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come?" It was not so with Enoch; the comforts of it did not so bewitch him, nor the cares of it so rack his spirit, but that he was one of the holiest and heavenliest men that ever lived.