

“LIFE IN THE GRAVEYARD OF DEATH” (Genesis 5:1-32)

There are certain people – and maybe you’re one of them – who like cemeteries – not in a morbid way – but they love walking through cemeteries, reading gravestones, and pondering the history of those who have gone before us. I learned this week that there’s even a name for people like this – they’re called taphophiles (tapf-a-files). Any taphophiles here? What is written on a gravestone gives us a brief synopsis of a person’s life – whether they lived a long life or a short life – what period of time they lived through – and perhaps a verse or saying that sums up their life.

After my mom died, my dad had a gravestone made for the both of them. We laugh about the gravestone to this day, because in filling out the form with the engraver as to what he wanted on the gravestone, my dad wrote out the verse from 2 Corinthians 5:8... “For we are confident that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” The engraver asked my dad to doublecheck the form because they put the exact wording on it that is submitted. My dad took a quick glance and said it was all correct. A few months later we go to the cemetery to look at the gravestone, and it says, “For we are *cofident*...” Cofident? They forget the letter “n.” Apparently, my dad didn’t check his wording as carefully as he should have. Now whenever Sharla and I say the word “confident,” we always say “cofident.” The moral of the story is: Be careful what you put on your gravestone because it’s permanent.

We come to Genesis 5 this morning, and some have called this chapter the graveyard of scripture. In it we have a list of ten names – men who lived and died – with some brief information about them – which serves something like a gravestone. It’s the kind of chapter, that when you’re reading through the Bible, you’re tempted to skip over. Who wants to read about a bunch of men who’ve been dead for thousands of years? Why is a chapter like this even included in the Bible? I’m glad you asked, because it serves a few very important purposes we will talk about. But we’re going to zero in on one particular name in this list – the name Enoch – because what is written on his gravestone stands out from all the others.

Before we get into his story, let me set the context for this chapter. The first five chapters of Genesis tell the story of mankind up until the flood in chapter 6. It’s a period of about 1600 years. Chapter one tells us about the creation of the world, chapter two about God’s special creation of Adam and Eve, and chapter three about their fall into sin. In chapter 4 we read about what happens to their first two children, and how Cain kills Abel. Chapter 4 ends by telling us what becomes of Cain’s family line, and how they build a prosperous civilization, but it is built on sand.

The most predominant descendant of Cain is Lamech, seven generations later, who leads an entirely godless life. He does whatever he wants. He ignores God’s order and design for marriage and marries two wives. He has no regard for human life and kills a man just for offending him. This godlessness runs down through the family line until we read in chapter six that the hearts of men were only evil all the time. After chapter 4, the lineage of Cain disappears from history and are swept away in the flood.

But at the end of chapter 4 we read that Adam and Eve have another son they name Seth. Seth and his kids and grandkids – and on down the line – call on the name of the Lord. Where Cain’s family lives a secular life devoid of God’s presence, Seth’s family recognizes their need for God and live lives devoted to Him. So during this 1600-year period you have two lines of people – Cain and his godless family – and Seth and his godly family – living side by side.

After giving us a snapshot of Cain’s family and his genealogy in chapter 4, in chapter 5 we are given a genealogy of Seth’s family line, and the ten patriarchs of the family – all the way from Adam to Noah.

This genealogy is in the Bible for three important reasons. One, it shows that **God is preserving a godly line through Seth so that His promise of a deliverer will be fulfilled**. Remember back in 3:15, God told Eve that her offspring and the offspring of the serpent would be at war with each other, but that her offspring would crush the head of the serpent and save them from the curse of sin. Eve would naturally assume that Cain – her firstborn – was that promised offspring – but he proved to belong to the evil one. And she might have thought it was Seth. Each generation lived with an expectation of the coming deliverer, and all through the Old Testament God preserves a royal line through which the Messiah would come – and these ten patriarchs represent that preservation.

When we fast-forward to Luke 3, we see the genealogy of Jesus, and all ten names in Genesis 5 are included in it. In other words, Jesus’ ancestors can be traced back all the way to Adam, through the line of Seth, just as we find here in chapter 5. This speaks volumes of God’s grace. He could have destroyed Adam and Eve after they sinned and started over, but He set in motion a plan to save humanity by sending His Son to earth to deliver mankind from the curse of sin.

Second, we also see in this genealogy a reminder of the theme, begun in chapter one, that that **mankind is unique and special**. Verses 1-3 says, “This is the written account of Adam’s family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them ‘Mankind’ when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.”

God created Adam in the image and likeness of God, which means that God gave something of Himself to us – something He did not give to the rest of creation. We bear a resemblance to God, and we were made to represent God. We are not merely physical beings – there is a transcendence to us. We are different than animals in that we are able to relate to God and each other, we are able to think and reason, and we have a conscience as to what is right and wrong.

Verse 3 says something interesting – when Adam has Seth it says that “he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image.” Does this mean that Seth bears Adam’s image and not God’s? Every human being is made in God’s image, but after Adam’s fall the image of God was marred. Part of being made in God’s image is that Adam – the first human being – was given the freedom to choose – and he choose to disobey and rebel against his creator, which tainted the image of God, and that damaged image was passed on to all his descendants. As theologians like to say, “The image of God in us has been *defaced*, but not *erased*.”

Seth still bore the image of God, but he also bore the his father’s sin nature, which hinders the image of God from being fully expressed in people. The good news is that someone will come from the line of Seth – in the perfect image and likeness of God – to redeem fallen humanity and restore us to the original image of God – and that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, we see in this genealogy that **the ultimate consequence of sin is death**. Back in chapter 3 God told Adam, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” When Adam ate of the fruit, he died spiritually, but not physically – at least not right away. In fact, in verses 4-5 we read, “After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.”

What’s amazing about this time period of 1600 years is how long people lived. Adam lived 930 years, which is hard for us to fathom. Only Methuselah beat him, living 969 years. Another amazing thing to consider is the overlap of generations. Adam lived long enough to see Lamech, Noah’s father, born. He knew all his descendants on this list. He lived a long, long time.

After the flood, of course, we see the lifespans of people go way down. Abraham lived 175 years. Joseph was 110. Moses was 120. For reasons we don't exactly know, before the flood people lived longer. Perhaps it was because the climate and living conditions were different before the flood; or it may be because of sin, the human genetic code became increasingly corrupted and made humans more susceptible to disease and death.

Adam lived almost a millennium, but then it says very simply, "Then he died." And this becomes the pattern of each patriarch in the genealogy. It first says how old he was when he had his firstborn child, and how many years he lived after that, and then, after each name, it says, "Then he died... Then he died... Then he died."

It shows that even as God reveals His grace in preserving a godly line made in His image and blessing them, at the same time mankind lives under a curse... the curse of death. Today we've become used to death. We don't like it, and we try to avoid thinking about it, and we do everything we can to delay it, but we know that everyone is going to die at some point.

We become conditioned to think that death is a natural part of life. We're born, we get 70 or 80 or 90 years if we're fortunate, and then we die. What we forget is that death is not natural. God created Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life and live forever. Death is not natural, but a brutal reminder of the curse of sin we all live under.

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned." In other words, each one of us born after Adam have his sin nature passed on to us, as well as the sentence of death because of sin. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." There's no way to gloss over or sugarcoat the harsh reality of death.

But this always brings us back to the gospel, and the fact that on the cross Jesus paid the penalty for our sins – He died so that we might live. And on Easter morning He conquered death by rising again from the grave, making it possible for all who trust in Him to one day also be raised from the dead. As believers this gives us a whole new perspective on death. Yes, it's still painful, and yes, we still grieve – but we view death not as the end, but the beginning of a whole new way of life in the presence of the Lord – free from the curse, free from pain, and free from suffering. This is why the Apostle Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." What a great attitude! Because my hope is found in Christ, I'll joyfully live life now for His glory, and when it comes time for me to die, life will be even better.

Reading through this genealogy – with its names and ages and repetition – is not terribly exciting, but as you're reading along you come to a patriarch who breaks the repetition and makes you sit up and take notice. In verses 21-24 we read, "When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."

Did you catch that? Up to this point we read the same phrase, "Then he died..." over and over six times. So-and-so lives so many years and then he dies. When we come to Enoch, it says that he lived a total of 365 years and then "he was no more, because God took him away." What does that mean? What does it mean that "he was not more?" And where did God take him? This is all the text tells us, but we learn more about Enoch in the New Testament.

In the great Hall of Faith chapter of Hebrews 11, Enoch is listed second as an example of faith – right after Abel. Verses 5-6 say, 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.

Instead of dying, God took Enoch directly into His presence. One minute he was on earth, and the next minute he was in heaven. He, along with Elijah, are the only ones taken to heaven without seeing death. But why Enoch? Why was he the exception to the rule of death? Hebrews says “he was commended as one who pleased God.” Genesis 5 says that he “walked faithfully with God.” The implication is that his walk with the Lord had something to do with his translation to heaven.

I puzzled over this because Abel – listed right before him – pleased God and he was murdered. Following Enoch in Hebrews 11, there is a long list of heroes who were just as faithful to God, yet they died – some were tortured, some sawn in two, and some were put to death by the sword. God has a different path for each of us, and it doesn’t really matter how we go out of this world as long as we are faithful.

At the same time, Enoch stands out as someone who walked so closely with the Lord that one day the Lord simply took him. The phrase that stands out on his gravestone is “He walked faithfully with God.” What does it mean to walk with God, and what can we learn from Enoch about our own walk with the Lord? Let me mention five things we can glean from this phrase.

To start with, **walking is a metaphor for intimacy with God.** When you see two people walking together, you know that they enjoy being together. Enemies do not walk side by side. Acquaintances may talk here and there, but they do not walk and spend time together. You walk with those you’re close to and enjoy. And as you walk, you talk – you talk about life, you talk about your interests, you talk about your concerns, and you listen as the other person talks about their life.

When you trust in Christ for salvation, you enter into a relationship with God, where you get to know Him better and better, and your walk with Him broadens and deepens. It’s what Jesus meant when He said, “Abide in me.” The Christian life is not just about duty or knowledge, but it’s an ever-developing relationship with the Lord. A walk with God is more than just about going to church once a week, and it’s more than just a daily devotional time you set aside – it’s a continual walk with the Lord throughout your day – where you include Him in every activity, every conversation, every problem, and every thought.

Second, **walking implies consistency and progression.** A journey of a thousand miles, they say, begins with a single step. Enoch, verse 22 says, did not begin his walk with the Lord until after the birth of his son Methuselah at age 65. He knew about the Lord, but He didn’t start walking with Him until he became a father. More than a few people start getting serious about their faith walk when they become parents. There’s something about holding a newborn baby in your arms that gets you thinking about the direction of your life and the kind of example you want to be for your children. Some people, like my grandparents, do not begin their walk until much later in life. But it’s never too late to begin a walk with the Lord.

Enoch walked with God for the next 300 years. That’s a long walk. The goal of walking with the Lord is become more like Christ, so that His life becomes our life. The goal is not perfection – we will never be like Christ until the day we see Him in glory – but the goal is *progress*. All of us here this morning are at different stages of our walk. Some of you are just starting out the Christian journey and you’re talking baby steps – and sometimes you fall – but you get back up and keep walking.

Some of you, perhaps, came charging out of the gate strong and were passionate about your faith – but then something happened – a bad experience or difficulty – and you faltered and you quit walking. Some of you have walked hundreds of miles with the Lord over the course of many years. Your walk isn't flashy, but it's consistent. As Micah 6:8 says, "You walk humbly with the Lord." The goal is that – wherever you are at this morning – you simply keep walking – putting one foot in front of the other – and with God's power and presence you keep walking through the ups and downs, the doubts and discouragements, until walking with God becomes a way of life.

Third, walking with God means that **you pattern your life after Christ**. 1 John 2:6 says, "Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." To walk as Jesus walked is to follow behind Him and imitate His life. Do your children sometimes imitate you? Don't you hate that? At least when they imitate the not so good things.

When my dad was 15, he broke his hip and walked the rest of his life with a slight limp. When I was young, a family friend watched as my dad and I walked across a parking lot. They noticed that I walked with the same limp my father walked with. Without realizing it, I was following in my dad's footsteps, following his example. I was a "chip off the old block." My relationship with my father was so close that I literally adopted his style of walking. In the same sense, we are to walk as Jesus walked, and imitate Him in every area of life – in our relationships, in our thought life, in our recreation, in our work. The longer we follow Jesus and imitate Him, the more our lives will begin to look just like His, so that it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me.

Fourth, walking with God means that **you will walk a different direction from the rest of the world**. Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" If you want to go north, and I want to go south, we're going in opposite directions. Walking with God means that you walk the way He wants you to walk, you let Him take the lead – and you say, "Where are we going today?"

Enoch lived in a time of incredible wickedness, in the days leading up to the flood, when the thoughts of men were only evil all the time. While everyone else was marching to their own drumbeat, Enoch set himself apart by walking with God. It's no mistake in genealogies of Cain's line and Seth's line that a patriarch from the seventh generation is highlighted. In chapter 4 we saw a man named Lamech, who was the seventh generation from the line of Cain, and now in chapter 5 Enoch is the seventh generation in the line of Seth. They live at the same time and the contrast between them is intentional.

Lamech walked his own walk – he was a secular man of the world – and his descendants were known for worldly progress and achievement. In contrast, there's nothing mentioned about Enoch building cities or inventing new things – what is highlighted is that he walked faithfully with God. And when you walk with God, you stand out from the crowd. They'll all be going one way and you'll be going the other way, and the other way is the way Jesus described as the "broad" way.

The other way – the narrow way – is hard because you're always in the minority – you're not celebrated or embraced by the world – and Jesus promises that by taking the narrow road, you'll be persecuted – you'll be ridiculed and marginalized – you won't be invited to parties – and in some countries, you might lose your life. I imagine Enoch, at times, felt very lonely, as his great-grandson Noah would feel as he and his family were left as the only righteous ones on earth.

This leads us to a fifth thought about walking with God, and that is that **the closer you walk with the Lord, the more burden you will have for the lost**. The more you walk in the light, the more you notice the darkness of the world. In the little New Testament book of Jude, we read there in verses 14-15 that Enoch warned his generation that God's judgment against sin was coming. He was a preacher.

So many times we get the idea that faith is a private thing – you just have your own faith and never mention it to anyone else. Why risk getting your head chopped off? But the closer you walk with the Lord, and the more in tune with the Holy Spirit you are, the more burdened we are for those who are headed for judgment. And like Enoch, you will be bold.

Verses 14-15 of Jude say, Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Enoch warned his generation of the coming flood of judgment, and we are to warn our generation of the judgment when Christ returns.

One of the ways Enoch warned his generation was through the naming of his son. He names his baby boy Methuselah which means, “When he is dead, it will be sent.” In other words, when my son Methuselah dies, the flood of judgment will be sent. As long as Methuselah is living, there’s time to be saved. As you know, Methuselah has the distinction of being the oldest person to ever live. He lived to be 969 years old, and caused Social Security to go bankrupt.

When Methuselah was around 850 years old, just a young man, Noah began building the ark in preparation for God’s judgment. The crowds mocked Noah. But as long as Methuselah was still alive, there was still time. Methuselah turned 900 and the crowds still mocked. Noah kept building. Methuselah turned 950 and still they mocked. Then 960, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969. Noah brought the animals and his family on the ark and Methuselah died the very year the flood came! Remarkable.

The fact that Methuselah was the oldest man to ever live illustrates the longsuffering grace and mercy of God. His life demonstrates that God’s judgment comes slowly. God does not wish for anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance. God delays His judgment as long as possible to give as many as possible the chance to repent. The closer Enoch walked with God, the more burdened his heart became for his generation.

Genealogies aren’t so boring after all! Here in the graveyard of death stands one individual who finds life. Yes, we will die, and yes, death is heartbreaking and painful – but when you walk with God, as Enoch did, you get the best of both worlds. You get to enjoy an intimate walk with the Lord now – you don’t just have to eke out life – but live abundantly. And when you die – or you are raptured out of this world like Enoch – your walk with God continues uninterrupted for eternity.

A little girl was telling her mom about her Sunday School lesson about a man named Enoch. Every day, she said, God would come by Enoch’s house and say, “Would you like to walk with me?” Enoch would come out of his house, open the gate and walk with God. He grew closer and closer to God. Every day he could not wait to walk with God and would wait for Him by the gate. One day God said, “Let’s take a long walk.” They walked all day until it grew late into the afternoon. Enoch said, “I should be getting home.” God said, “Enoch, you are closer to my home than to you home, so why don’t you come home with me?”

May God find all of us walking faithfully with Him.