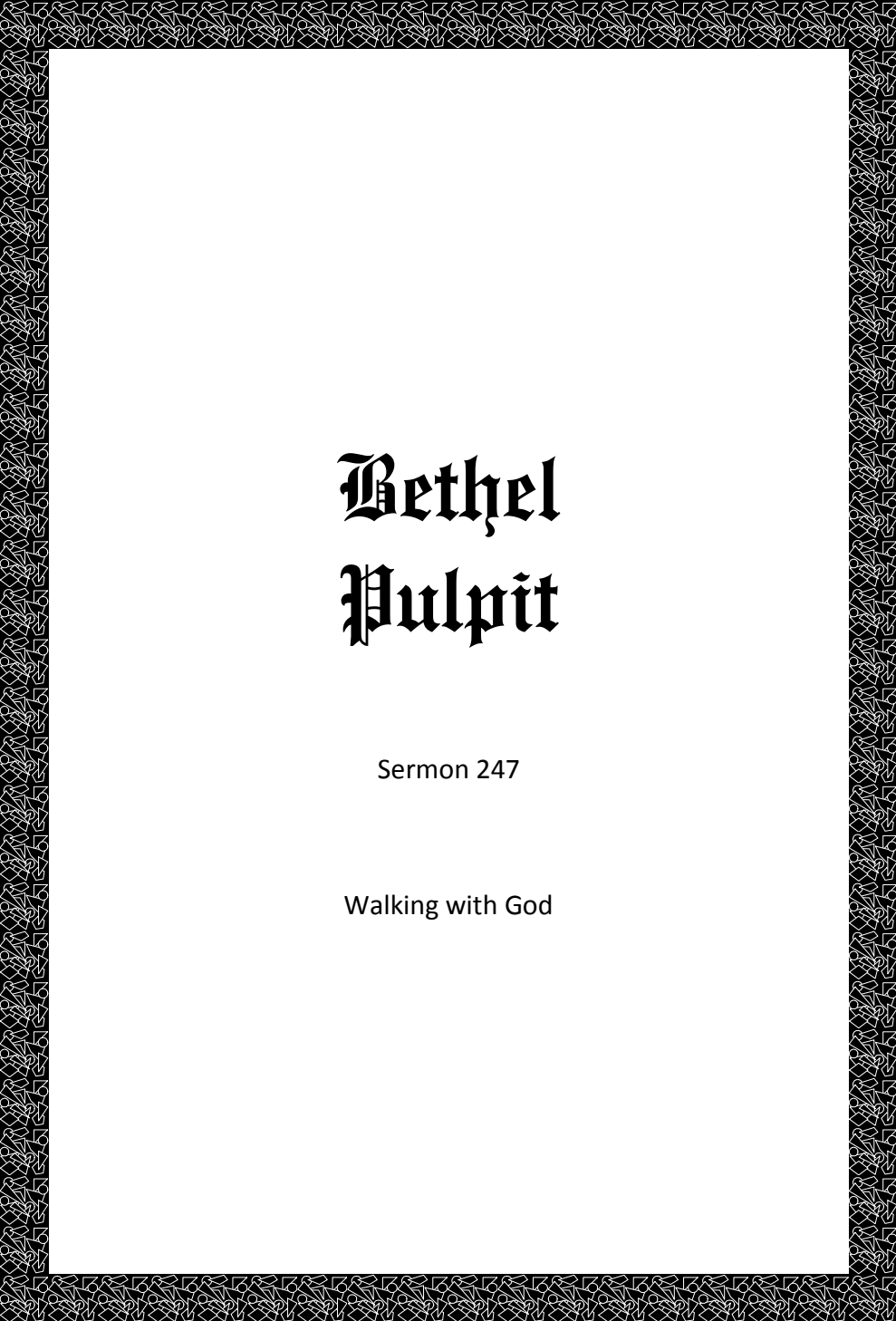




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 247

Walking with God

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 8th January, 2006**

Text: “*And Enoch walked with God*” (Genesis 5. 24).

Sometimes when we are reading through the Word of God we come to a chapter which seems to be nothing but a list of names. Now what do we do? Do not slide over it; do not omit it; it is part of the inspired Word of God. Pray that the Lord might make it profitable to you.

Sometimes you might say, “But what profit can there be in it?” Many years ago, a most ungodly man was asked to go to chapel and he was not really interested at all. When the minister after the first hymn gave out the reading, Genesis 5, he was bored. He thought, “But what on earth is the profit of this? I may as well have stayed at home.” As the chapter went on, the Holy Spirit used the Word. There is Adam here, the first man, and he died. And then there is another one and he died. And some of them lived a long time, and they died. And then there was Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived, and he died. And the man sitting in the pew thought, “That means that one day I must die.” And so the Holy Spirit used the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis in the conversion of that man. Now never limit the Spirit of God and never limit the Word of God. “The Word of God is not bound.” “*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.”

But apart from that, in some of these places you will find little hidden gems, little hidden jewels, and you find one here. There is more or less nothing said about all these other people. A lot could have been said about Adam, but nothing is. We wonder about Seth: there is nothing said about him. What about old Methuselah? Wouldn't we like to know about him? Nothing is said about him. Even Noah, that is going to come later; nothing said about him. But just this one man, Enoch, and he “walked with God.” The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, takes up the case of this man Enoch as an example of true faith, the life of faith, the triumph of faith. “By faith Enoch.” So there was a witness, a witness to the truth in these early days of the world's history.

Of course, the remarkable thing about this man Enoch is that he was one of the only two men who have ever lived who never died, the other one, of course, being Elijah. The apostle puts it like this: “By faith

Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” So he was taken out of this world of wickedness without seeing death. Elijah was the only other. Of course, the sovereignty of God is a great mystery and God gives no account of His matters, but I take it the case of Enoch and the case of Elijah were to be a standing witness to the Old Testament church that there is life after death. Here and there you have a glimpse of it, a hint of it. Job: “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” and so he goes on. David in some of his Psalms: “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” But these two living witnesses that there is life after death, and not just for the soul, not only for the soul, because both Enoch and Elijah were taken up bodily into heaven.

But isn't the sovereignty of God a great mystery! The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with the worthies of faith. Of course, all the way through it is the worthies of faith, but it begins with Abel and then Enoch and then Noah. Then you go on to Abraham. But you take these first two who are mentioned, the first two the Holy Ghost mentions as the first witnesses to the faith of God's elect. It seems clear that both of them were godly men living in a wicked world. What happened to them? One was murdered, a cruel death, and at the hands of his own brother, and the other one never even tasted death; he was taken straight to heaven without dying. That is the mystery of divine sovereignty. You find it in the days of the martyrs, the days of the Huguenots, the days of the Covenanters – two eminently godly ministers; one, the Lord performs a miracle that he might escape those who were seeking his death; his brother minister suffers a cruel death, either by beheading or on the scaffold. Now the mystery of divine sovereignty!

But these old patriarchs had a good religion. Enoch had a good religion. This was God's testimony of Him – not what people said about him, thought about him, but what God thought about him – he walked with God. When you and I come to the end of our little lives, I wonder of how many of us here it will be recorded, “He walked with God.” Now that is real religion. He walked with God. Let us be very clear on this: this was a most evil day in which Enoch lived, those days before the flood – so much wickedness, so much evil, that God destroyed the world by flood. But there is one man here, Enoch, and he was different. He was separated from the world. He was not carried away by its pleasures or by its persecutions. He walked right through this world. He walked with God. “He had this

testimony, that he pleased God.” And then God took him to glory to Himself.

Often our young people must feel, never was there a day like this, such a wicked, awful, evil day. How can I live my life out? How can I walk with God? How can I walk out my religion? How can I walk out my profession? But you have it all through Scripture and going right back to this far-off day. A man named Enoch; we know little about him; one of the patriarchs. He lived in this awful, evil day, and yet his life, he walked with his God right through it. These old patriarchs did have a good religion. I have often thought about it. Years later the patriarch Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” How many in these favoured gospel days see God face to face? And do not forget, these old patriarchs had not any Bible to read. They had not any chapel to go to. They had not any preacher to listen to. They had just as much religion as they received personally and directly from God. Now if you and I were shut up to that, would we have any religion left at all? Mr. Gosden used to say, “If I were shut away to live alone for a few years in the middle of the Sahara Desert, I wonder how much religion I would have left!” Well, if we had not a Bible or a hymnbook or a minister or a chapel or even godly friends, how much religion would we have left? And if we had only as much religion as we have received directly from God – if you take away all the tradition and the family connections and the emotionalism and the sentimentality, if you take away all these things – how much religion have we that we have received immediately, directly from God?

Well then, beloved friends, this is real religion, walking with God. And if your religion and mine is real, if it is the religion of the Spirit of God, if it is the religion that will take us to heaven at last, then in greater or less measure we shall walk with God.

Now what is it? This world is a wilderness, a waste-howling wilderness. The Christian life has to be walked out. It is so often spoken of as a pilgrimage. There are so many dangers. There are so many enemies. There are so many things against us. But if our religion is real, it will be a religion that is walked out, right through this world of sin and evil and wickedness, a way that is walked out from earth to heaven, a way that is walked out, that narrow way which leads to heaven. Now we shall walk with God, and the reason, beloved friends, is this: that no sinner can ever get to heaven walking alone, walking by himself. If we are not blessed

with grace to walk with God, His presence with us, our help received from Him, our dependence upon Him, then we can never, never get to heaven. We can never reach heaven at last.

In the middle of one of our hymns there is that cry: "Leave me not to walk alone." If we are left to walk alone, then we can never reach heaven, we can never get to heaven. And Enoch realised this, and if your religion and mine is real, we shall realise it. There is the wilderness journey. There is a pathway. There is a pilgrimage. There is a way to be walked out. We are weak and helpless and sinful and foolish. The world is strong. Temptation is strong. Satan is strong. "Leave me not to walk alone." We need the Lord Himself to be with us. We need the Lord Himself to walk with us. Now this is the only way, the only way that leads to heaven, a sinner walking with Christ in that narrow way which leads to heaven. Of course, some of the old preachers used to say that the road is so narrow that there is only room for two side by side, you and the Saviour.

In that far-off day, Enoch realised it, and the New Testament tells us the secret: "By faith," by God-given faith. He realised there was a way to heaven. He realised it must be walked in. He realised it must be walked out. He realised that he could not walk it out alone. He realised he needed a God and Saviour to walk it out with him, One to help him, to uphold him, to support him, to supply his needs, to bless him, to save him; One upon whom he could lean, One upon whom he could depend.

"And Enoch walked with God." And the New Testament goes on to say, "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Comparing scripture with scripture, that simply means this: it is the life of faith which pleases God; it is the life of dependence which pleases God; it is the life walked out with the Saviour which pleases God. Is it ever a concern to you: does your life, does my life, please God? Do the things that I do please God? Do I want to please Him? Do I seek to please Him? Or is it just that I want to please myself?

On one occasion, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said this: "I do *always* those things that please Him." Now you and I cannot say that. We cannot say that *always* we do those things that please God. We trust it is our desire; we trust that sometimes we do. But often it is self-pleasing. But there is a pattern, there is a standard, to seek grace to do only those things that please God. We have that testimony: "Even Christ pleased not Himself." He pleased not Himself.

“And Enoch walked with God.” Now by nature we do not walk with God. By nature Enoch did not walk with God. By nature we walk in our own way; we walk in a sinful way; we walk in the way of the flesh; we walk in the way that leads to hell. By nature none of us walks with God. So there must be a gracious change and there must be a gracious beginning. The old prophet comes right to the point. He puts it like this. He says, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Now can they? “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Can a holy God walk with a ruined sinner with no concern about his sins and his soul and his salvation, who is just bent on sin and pleasure? Now, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

So there must be reconciliation, and there must be a meeting place between a holy God and a guilty sinner. That meeting place is in Christ; that meeting place is at the cross, the place where sin is dealt with, where sin is put away, where there is “a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.” There a guilty sinner in his little measure is brought by faith to trust in Christ, to look to Christ alone, to rest on the merits of Christ alone. Then that sinner can walk with God and God can walk with that sinner. He is still a sinner – O but there is a principle of grace in his heart. There is a desire to please God. He possesses God’s holy fear. He is separated from the world. And so when this work of reconciliation has been performed by the Spirit of God, there you see that new life, that new pilgrimage, that new walk, God and the sinner walking together on the way to heaven. Now what a mercy, what a privilege!

“Enoch walked with God.” Of course, there is a great point here concerning nearness and union and communion. Where we come short surely is this: we do not know so much of that *close* walk with God, that cleaving to God in Christ, that hanging on Him, that coming up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. We walk with God, but sometimes we lose sight of Him and sometimes we lag behind. Mind you, He is still with us. His loving eye is still on us. He will not let us wander too far. There will be the chastisement. There will be something to bring us back. There will be something in your life and you cannot do without Him, and you will come running back to His feet seeking His help again. But we do lag behind, and we do wander, and we do turn aside. But O to know that close walk with God, that clinging and that cleaving to Him.

“And Enoch walked with God.” It is repeated twice. The first time: “And Enoch walked with God ... three hundred years,” which means he walked with God to his dying day. Now what a witness! There are many who seem to begin well walking with God. Then they turn aside, and then they go back, and then they do not continue. There are some who begin walking with God, O but there is that lingering and languishing and falling behind. Now what a witness this: “And Enoch walked with God ... three hundred years” – from the moment he began to the moment his life on earth ended and he was translated to heaven!

“And Enoch walked with God ... three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” The Word of God is so precise, and very meaningful and very helpful. You say, “What has this to do with it: he ‘walked with God ... three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters’?” I take it to mean this: he was not a wealthy man living in a castle surrounded with servants. He was a family man. He had all these children running around. It was not always easy. He was a family man. It seemed he had a lot of children round him. Some people seem to think of a walk with God as a hermit or someone in seclusion or in a monastery. Here was a man. He begets his sons and his daughters. He has all his family pleasures and all his family cares and all his family distractions, but he does not let them interfere with his walking with God. It is so easy to be drawn aside. What did the Lord say about the good seed, the growth stifled by the thorns, the riches of this world, deceitful pleasures, the cares of this life? The point is this: you can have bad things distract you from walking with God, but you can be distracted from walking with God by good things, even lawful things. Of course, the prime example: dear, godly Martha of Bethany. What could be a better thing than serving the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, looking after Him, caring for Him? But she was drawn aside from walking with God. Mary was not. “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” They are drawing you away from walking with God.

“And Enoch walked with God,” and he walked with God three hundred years, and he still walked with God when he begat sons and daughters. “Enoch walked with God.” Well, if there are two walking together, surely, surely they talk together. It would be a strange walk, especially if it went on for three hundred years, if they never spoke to one another. What am I getting at? Well, I take it that one of the great points

in the Christian walk with God is prayer. In its sweet simplicity, surely that is what prayer is: as we seek to walk through this wilderness with the Lord, to talk to Him. Our hymnwriter says, “He kindly listens while they tell the bitter pangs they feel within.” If you are walking with God, you will not be silent to Him. You will be telling Him your sins, you will be telling Him your sorrows, and you will be giving thanks to Him for His mercies. It is not much of a walk with God if you are not often in prayer to Him, if you are not often calling upon His name. O the wonderful privilege, an unworthy sinner favoured to walk with God, favoured to make your wants and wishes known, favoured to ask for His help, favoured to pray that He will supply your need, favoured to go the great God of heaven and say “Lord, I am sorry,” and that great God of heaven is not offended; for He listens, “and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”

“Enoch walked with God.” And surely if we walk with God, then there will be times when He speaks to us. That is union and communion, a sinner speaking to God through Christ, and God speaking to him. Perhaps it tries us this evening. Has the Lord ever spoken to me personally? Or does the Lord speak to me personally? Or how long is it since the Lord spoke to me personally? It is an awful thing if God is always, always silent to us. The psalmist said, “O Lord ... be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.” In other words, if God never speaks to me, never, then I have the mark of the lost; I have the mark of them that go down into the pit. O if you walk with God, you will oftentimes speak to Him and He will give you a listening ear, and you will want Him to speak to you.

“And Enoch walked with God.” O but the wonder of it, the privilege of it! I take it that there are two different times naturally in our life when we do not want to be found just walking alone. One is if we do not know our way. Have you known that experience, perhaps being in a strange place, or out in the country, and you are walking along, and you lose your way? I have known some country lanes and you hardly seem to see anyone. Or your might be on the hills and moors and you are not just sure where you are going, or it may be you come to a crossroads and there is not any signpost there. You do not know whether you go to the right or the left, and it is a good thing if you hear footsteps and someone is able to walk with you and show you the right way to go. That is one of the great

privileges of a sinner walking with God – divine guidance, gracious leading, wisdom given. “This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” “He led them on safely.” “He led them forth by the right way.” So often we do not know where we are. We do not know which way to take. We lack the wisdom. O but if we have one walking with us, by our side, who knows the way, who has gone that way before – “This is the way, walk ye in it” – there is no mistake. You are going to come safely through.

“And Enoch walked with God.” Now the second time when it is hard to be walking alone is if you ever are going home, perhaps in the middle of the night, and you have to walk. It is very dark, and you are frightened; you are nervous, and you wonder if someone might attack you. You have known it, some of you. Perhaps we knew it more in former days when there was not so much street lighting, or when there were not the cars, and the buses and trains were not running late, times when you had to go home late at night and you had to go through some dangerous places, and you wished you did not. I am talking naturally. Perhaps there is a kind friend, and you see him and walk with him, or he sees you and joins you. Don’t you feel completely different? There are two of you walking together now. Perhaps you were only a little boy and this is a big man, and he is strong. You feel so happy, so safe.

“And Enoch walked with God.” But those “days of darkness,” and the Word says, “They shall be many.” Darkness in your soul, in your circumstances, bereavement, sorrow, perplexity, disappointment. There you are walking in the dark. O but the difference if you are not left to walk alone, if there is a friend walking with you, and talking with you, and helping you, and comforting you, and you come safely through the dark. You come to your destination. O this wonderful privilege of being permitted to walk with God. There is safety in it, security. “He led them on safely.” If the Lord did not walk with us, we should be lost, we should have perished, we should have turned back.

So we know the Lord walking with us, but sadly so often we lag behind, or we stop, or turn out of the way, and sometimes we try to get in front. That will not do. And sometimes we lose sight of Him. Yet we can sing, “He will never, never leave us; nor will let us quite leave Him.” “Be content with such things as ye have: for He” – this great God who walks with a helpless sinner – “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake

thee,” despite all your backsliding, your ill-manners, your turning aside. The love, the mercy, the grace. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” O for grace to follow more closely, to cling more closely to the Saviour! “There safety dwells, and there alone.” So may we have the religion of Enoch: “And Enoch walked with God.”

* * *

O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

W. Cowper