

## The Power and Reward of Christian Faith

*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he would not see death and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For, before he was taken away, he had this testimony, that he had pleased God. <sup>6</sup> Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly search for Him. Hebrews 11:5-6*

By faith Enoch was taken away and had the testimony that he had pleased God. Maybe we ask, what faith, faith in whom or in what? The writer of Hebrews does not expressly say what the object of his faith was, but we know from Scripture that it was faith in the Promised Seed of the woman who would come and crush the head of the Serpent, the Evil one who had led man into sin. No other faith is known to the saints and no other faith pleases God, and no other faith gives man the power to walk with God as Enoch did; and in Genesis we are told that "Enoch walked with God" (Gen. 5:24). To "walk with God" means to live with Him as though He were near and to obey His commandments (1 John 5:1-3). It was faith that had given Enoch the power to walk with God in an evil world. Christian faith is not an idle thought, but a powerful thing. This is also evident from what we read about Enoch in another place, Jude 14-15: "*Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam, prophesied about them also. He said, "Look! The Lord has come with ten thousands of His holy ones, <sup>15</sup> to carry out judgment on all and to convict every soul for all the ungodly things that they have done in their ungodliness and for all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."* A towering picture! Enoch stood up and threatened the extremely wicked world of his day (Gen. 6:5) with the impending judgment of God. From where did Enoch get such insight, assurance, and courage? It was rooted in Enoch's faith. Enoch believed God's Word and promise, which includes that God is not only merciful, but also just and holy; and because he believed that about God, he had rebuked and warned the world of God's judgment. If he had not had such a faith, he would not have spoken as he did.

The same power that we see in Enoch's faith is given to faith today, *if* it is the same kind of faith that Enoch had. Wherever there are people today that have the faith of Enoch, there the power of faith will show itself in the same way, it will "prophecy" to a crooked, perverse, and godless world, that the Lord is coming with thousands of His holy ones to carry out judgment on all. But, like in Enoch's day, the voices that rise in protest and condemnation of the godlessness, hypocrisy and permissiveness of our age are few and far between. So we pray, "Lord, increase our faith" and give us the faith of Enoch!

From the brief account of Enoch's life we also learn that faith such as Enoch's, had a wonderful reward. Christian faith is not a good work done by man to earn God's favour, but a divine gift or power that reaches out for and receives those things which God has promised to give for the Saviour's sake. That is what Enoch did. He reached out for and laid hold on God's promise given to Adam, that a Saviour would come from God to deliver men from death and the power of sin into which man had fallen by his own fault and incurred the wrath and displeasure of God. But, if sin be taken away, so Enoch rightly reasoned, then God's displeasure with man must cease and peace rule again between God and man. In this way, by this faith, Enoch obtained the assurance that he "pleased God" and that God counted him righteous in His sight for the coming Redeemer's sake. And that is the first reward of the faith that looks to Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, it gives believers the assurance, that God's wrath against the sinner is stilled, that we are now again members of God's family and heirs of eternal life.

The other reward of faith, as we see it fulfilled in Enoch, is our "taking away". We read: "*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he would not see death.*" God took him to Himself because of his faith. God has promised redemption from death by the Saviour who was to come. This Enoch believed. He believed in the resurrection of the body from death to everlasting life through the Redeemer, and what he believed, he received; he was taken up into heaven and eternal life, without seeing death. This was a special dispensation of God, intended to comfort and assure believers of all time that God will keep His promise to redeem man from death and the grave to live with God in peace forever.

On the basis of God's promise we Christians, like Enoch, believe in "the resurrection of the body and in life everlasting," a belief so astonishing that some churchmen today deny it, claiming that, when a man is dead, he is dead for good; there is nothing to indicate that he will ever see life again. But we, who believe God's Word and promise like Enoch, are not shaken by such arguments. We know that God's promise is sure and effective; He cannot lie and deceive, because He is truthful; and His power to do what He has promised is unlimited. Therefore we look forward with joy to the day of our being taken away from this mortal to immortality - faith's final and wonderful reward.