

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part XVI: Being Personally Blessed Via Faith In An Apostate Era"
(Hebrews 11:1, 5-6 with Genesis 5:22-24)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Spiritual decline in our world is a "given": in a private letter to me dated February 24, 1998, a believer in our Church wrote about a news clipping she had inserted in the letter. She was concerned at what was happening in West Hartford.

Later that month, the town's council was going to meet to discuss if it would permit gay and lesbian couples to qualify for reduced family rates at the city pool. The recommendation had come following complaints that discounts had previously been given only to heterosexual couples, and thus the city had allegedly unconstitutionally discriminated against homosexual unions!

This attempted moral makeover in West Hartford fit the pattern set in the cities of Sodom and Gomorra that fell under God's judgment on homosexuality (Jude 7). Thus, this concerned believer wondered if I could do anything to help stop this moral decay in her city!

Is it possible for a believer to enjoy God's richest personal blessing though living in the midst of such spiritual decay?!

(2) Evangelical Christians are **regularly** confronted with the issue of spiritual decay within **Christian** organizations! Author, Dave Hunt wrote in his January '98 newsletter, The Berean Call wrote that Richard Twiss, a Lakota Indian, got Promise Keepers to ask Native American men to **host** its October 4th 'Standing in the Gap' gathering in Washington, D. C. These men participated in full Native American dress including the eagle war bonnet. That bonnet signifies that "the wearer actually becomes the eagle, which is to say that he identifies himself, his real Self, with Wakan-Tanka [the Great Spirit which . . . (the Spotted Eagle) represents." (Ibid., p. 3 in citing Brown, The Sacred Pipe . . . (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. 7, 45). Thus, the Promise Keepers gathering that **began** as mainly Evangelical men aiming to foster godly family responsibility among Christian men has come to **include** the promoted symbolism of actual **PAGAN** beliefs!

Well, CAN a believer enjoy God's rich personal blessing though living in a RELIGIOUS community of declining vitality?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "In view of the world's moral decline and even the spiritual deterioration in CHRISTENDOM, can an individual Christian TODAY live with God's rich blessing?! IF so, HOW may that be?"

- I. **The author of Hebrews urged his Jewish Christian readers to worship the heavenly Christ rather than revert back to using the Jewish temple rituals under godless peer pressure, Heb. 9:7-10, 11-14 (sermon XII); Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1729.**
- II. **This vocation involved a LIFE of FAITH in Scripture versus heeding pressures to err from VISIBLE, FALSE things, Heb. 11:1.**
- III. **In one APPLICATION of this exercise, the readers were to follow Enoch's "walk with God" example to enjoy God's blessing amidst the mass spiritual decline around them, Heb. 11:5-6; Gen. 5:22-24:**
 - A. As an example, the author of Hebrews held up Old Testament Enoch's faith by which he was translated to avoid death, Hebrews 11:2, 5a.
 - B. The Genesis **context** reveals a great **contrast** in moral lifestyle and degree of blessing experienced by Enoch and most men of his era:
 1. After Adam's sin, his son, Cain produced an evil lineage, Gn. 4:17ff.
 2. Seth, Adam's third main son, countered Cain's wickedness by producing a godly line, Gen. 4:25f; Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 35.
 3. Yet, Seth's line began to marry into Cain's line, leading to tragedy:
 - a. Though some view the "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2 as angels who cohabited with women, Jesus revealed in Matt. 22:30 that angels are **asexual**. These "sons of God" were **not** angels, Ibid., p. 36!
 - b. Further, Jesus commented on that Genesis 6:2 era, saying that **people** were then lustfully marrying and partying, Mtt. 24:38.
 - c. Also, the **context** introduces Cain's ungodly line with Seth's godly line, so we should see the "sons of **God**" to be Seth's line.
 - d. Hence, Seth's sons **tragically married** Cain's base "daughters of men", producing a decay of **home life** in the **world**, Gen. 6:4-5.
 - e. Thus, men regularly **died** due to sin (Gen. 5:3-31), and the race was **destined** for destruction with the Flood judgment (6:4-7).
 4. Opposite this apostasy and death about him, **Enoch** was rewarded by being raptured for his 300-year "walk with God", Gen. 5:22, 24!
- IV. **Just WHAT it MEANS to "walk with God" TODAY as Enoch did in HIS era is explained in STIMULATING style in Scripture :**
 - A. Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, sparked his readers' **motivation** to "walk with God" by how he **artfully presented** this "walk" theme:

1. Having focused on it by *twice* mentioning Enoch's "walk" with God (Gen. 5:22, 24), Moses created a *vacuum* by **not immediately explaining** what it meant: having gained the reader's interest, Moses sought to motivate him to **apply** what "walk" meant once he more fully developed the idea in the Pentateuch, T. J. Cole, "Enoch, a Man who Walked with God," Bib. Sac., Jul.-Sep., '91, p. 295.
2. If we then search Moses' Pentateuch for the meaning of this "walk," we find a wealth of directional insight on "walking with God":
 - a. Enoch's walk in Gen. 5 uses the *hithpael* stem, and when this stem for "walk" appears in the Pentateuch, it nearly always (exc. Ex. 21:19) has **God** as one of its subjects, Ibid., Cole, p. 291.
 - b. Accordingly, we note this *hithpael* stem use for God's "walk" in Eden (Gen. 3:8) in His seeking fellowship with Adam as well as with Noah's "walk" in Gen. 6:9 and **especially** Abram's "walk" with God in Gen. 17:1; 24:40! (Ibid., Cole, p. 291-292)
 - c. Well, Noah's "walk" involved his being upright and mature in a general sense, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. of Gen. 6:9.
 - d. As for Abram, we see the "walk" included his trusting God and adjusting his works to that faith in the **midst** of evil Canaanites, Gen. 17:1; 24:40 in light of Gen. 12:1-3. That faith in turn led to Abram's justification (Gen. 15:6) **and** maturity (Gen. 22:15ff).
 - e. **Amazingly**, this "walk" theme by *Moses*, the **law-giver**, appears of the *pre-Law* saints, Enoch and Abram. *Moses* thus exalted a **better** life than **externally keeping rules -- that of trusting God!** (Sailhamer, Gen., v. 2, p. 74, cited in Cole, Ibid., p. 295)
3. Other Scriptures reveal God's heartening rewards for Enoch's *faith*:
 - a. Hebrews 11:5-6 shows that upon believing God existed and would reward him, Enoch was translated never to die.
 - b. Jude 14-15 tells us Enoch **also** was told by God of Christ's **Second Coming**, a huge insight for a **pre-Flood** man of his day!

Application: For personal blessing in a decaying world and failing Christendom, (1) we can BELIEVE God exists and (2) TRUST His Son to receive eternal life and eventually be raptured to heaven as was Enoch, Jn. 3:16; Jn. 14:1-3. (3) Then, we can HEED God's Word OPPOSITE the externalism and sin of those about us as did Enoch and Abram, enjoying great insight and rewards as they did!

Lesson: Though living in an evil world and amidst apostasy of the godly, if we believe God exists and will reward us for a non-ritualistic faith in His Word, like Enoch and Abram, we will enjoy God's richest blessing!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

avoid the truth in Christ! With such a cultic background and apostate, wicked surroundings, one might think Irene didn't have a chance to enjoy fellowship with a holy God of grace in Christ.

However, by God's grace, somehow little Irene was led to faith in Jesus Christ. She found eternal life by trusting Him by faith alone.

Since she knew of Nepaug Church through a fellow Christian, Irene asked me to baptize her in the Nepaug River behind our Church. I remember as she came up out of the water, Irene was so full of joy at having obeyed the Lord by faith in His Word contrary to her background beliefs in the matter of believer's baptism, that she clasped her hands together and looked sky-ward in complete bliss!

I since have learned that Irene has gone right up to a Latin Kings gang member in Hartford, and point-blank ask, "Do you know Jesus as your Savior?!" If anyone else were to try that, they might be beaten up. But bold, little Irene, with her deep commitment to Christ, can make these tough gangsters melt as she courageously, lovingly tells them about gaining new life by faith in Christ!

If little Irene with her cultic, legalistic background living in the socially and ecclesiastically decadent streets of Hartford, Connecticut can be saved and then baptized as a believer, only to return to the decadent streets of Hartford as a light for Christ's grace, then YES: THE INDIVIDUAL CAN ENJOY GOD'S POWER AND BLESSING IN TODAY'S LAWLESS AGE!

Our part is to follow in the train of Old Testament Enoch and Abraham as has Irene of Hartford, and believe God exists, believe His Word, and live full of joy and blessing by faith in Christ!