

# THE CHRISTIAN RACE

*AND OTHER SERMONS*

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

J. C. RYLE, D.D.,

*Lord Bishop of Liverpool*

LONDON  
HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
27 PATERNOSTER ROW

MCM

## PREFATORY NOTE

**A**LTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years’* ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,

*Archdeacon of Warrington.*

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st*, 1900.

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900.  
[Bishop Ryle died a few months later.]

## XVIII.

### *ENOCH.*

“Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him.” GEN. v. 24.

**Y**OU all wish to go to heaven. I know it. I am fully persuaded of it. I am certain of it. There is not one of you, however false may be his views of what he must believe and what he must do, however unscriptural the ground of his hope, however worldly-minded he may be during the week, however careless when he gets outside that door—there is not one of you, I say, who does not wish to go to heaven. But I do sadly fear that many of you, without a mighty change, will never get there. You would like the crown, but you do not like the cross; you would like the glory, but not the grace; the happiness, but not the holiness; the peace, but not the truth; the victory, but not the fight; the reward, but not the labour; you would like the harvest, but not the ploughing; you would like the reaping, but not the sowing; and so I fear that many of you will never get to heaven.

Well, you may say, these are sharp words, this is hard measure; but we should like to know what sort of people they are who will be saved. I shall give you a short and very general answer. They who have the same faith as those holy men whose names are recorded in the Bible—they who walk in that same narrow path which all the saints of God have trodden—such persons and such only shall have eternal life and never enter into condemnation.

Indeed, beloved, there is but one way to heaven; and in this way every redeemed soul that is now in Paradise has walked. This is the way you must yourselves be content to follow; and if you are really wise, if you really love life, as you profess to do, you will take every opportunity of examining the characters of those who have gone before you, you will mark the principles on which they acted, you will note the end they had in view, you will try to profit by their experience, you will follow them so far as they followed Christ.

Now, I purpose this morning to speak to you about the history of Enoch, who was one of the first among those who by faith and patience have inherited the promises; and I shall divide what I have to say upon the subject into four parts.

- I. What was the character of the age in which he lived?
- II. What was his own character?
- III. What was the leading motive or principle which influenced him?
- IV. What was his end?

God grant that you may all be stirred up to a diligent inquiry into your own state; may many of you, hearing how Enoch walked with God, be led to pray, “Lord, I would walk with Thee (I have sinned, but I repent in dust and ashes), Lord Jesus, I would be Thine, create in me a clean heart, guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward bring me unto glory.”

I. Now, respecting the age when Enoch lived we know little, but that little is very bad. He was the seventh from Adam, and lived in the time before the flood. In those days, we are told, the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence. Every sort of wickedness seems to have prevailed; men walked after the vile lusts of their hearts, and did that which appeared good to them without fear and without shame. The children of Cain, after he murdered Abel, as far as we can learn, made no attempt whatever to keep God in their thoughts,—like the prodigal son, they went afar off from Him and gave themselves up to worldly employments, as if they would keep the Lord out of their minds as much as possible. They got a name as founders of cities, like men who looked upon this earth as their home, and set all their affection on things below and had no desire after the new Jerusalem above, the city of the Lord God and of the Lamb. They became famous and skilful in all the works of this life: one was called the father of shepherds, and another the father of musicians; but we read of none that was a father of faithful lambs in Christ’s flock, of none that was a father of children who made God’s statutes their song in the house of their pilgrimage. And another was a teacher of artificers in brass and iron; but we do not hear of any who taught the good knowledge of the Lord. In short, they were all clever in finding out how to be rich and how to be merry and how to be powerful; but they were not wise unto salvation, there was nothing of God and His fear and His service among them.

Such were the children of Cain; and they seem to have been such pleasant company, so little disposed to trouble other people by talking about the soul and heaven and hell, that nearly everybody took after them, and the world was tainted and infected with their manners; insomuch that the few who still clung to the true God became separated from the rest by a line of distinction: they began to be called by the name of the Lord.

But even this separation did not last long. We are next told, that they who professed to be the sons of God began to think there was no harm in marrying persons who cared nothing about religion; they chose wives who were unbelievers,—beautiful and agreeable, no doubt, but still enemies of God,—and (as it has almost always proved when a Christian has been united to one that is not a Christian), the bad soon corrupted the good, or else the good did not convert the bad, and the families that were born of these unions proved earthly, sensual, and devilish, and in a short time the whole

world was full of sin.

Consider, beloved, what a fearful proof you have here of the natural bent of man's heart towards wickedness! They had the recollection of God's anger against transgression fresh upon their minds; they had Paradise before their eyes, they had the angels of God keeping the way of the tree of life with flaming swords; and yet, in spite of all this, they sinned with a high hand. They went on much as the world likes to do now: they ate, they drank, they planted, they builded, they bought, they sold, they made light of warnings. "What have we do with the Lord?" they thought; "let us enjoy ourselves while we can." But God will not be mocked, and though He bore with them long and exhorted them by His servants, He dealt with them at last according to their works; and just as He will one day send the fire upon this earth, so did He send the waters of the deep: the flood came and cut them off in the middle of their revellings, and drowned the whole world excepting eight persons.

Such was the character of the men before the flood; and in the middle of this age of wickedness Enoch lived, and Enoch walked with God. There were no Bibles then, no prayer-books, no religious tracts, no churches, no ministers, no sacraments: Christ had never been seen; the way of salvation had never been clearly made known; the gospel was only seen dimly in the distance; it was not fashionable to think about religion, it was not fashionable to worship God at all. There was nothing to encourage people to make a profession. Yet in the middle of this wicked and adulterous generation this saint of the Most High did live; Enoch walked with God. It is almost impossible to imagine a more splendid proof of what grace can do for a weak, sinful man than is to be found in these words; in the world before the flood "Enoch walked with God."

II. I promised in the second place to tell you something about Enoch's character. You have heard he walked with God, and you know, perhaps, it is an expression of great praise; but I may not leave you here without trying to give you a clear notion of its meaning. People often get a habit of using words without exactly knowing what they mean, and a very bad habit it is. Now, I say that this walking with God has many different senses; it is an expression full of matter.

A man that walks with God is one of *God's friends* That unhappy enmity and dislike which men naturally feel towards their Maker has been removed; he feels perfectly reconciled and at peace. How indeed can two walk together except they be agreed? He does not hide himself from the Lord, like Adam in the trees of the garden, but he seeks to be in constant communion with Him. He is not as many who are uncomfortable at the idea of being alone with God for he is never perfectly happy excepting in His

company. He feels that he cannot be too much with Him, because he desires to be of the same mind, to think like Him, to act like Him, to be conformed to His image. Such a one was Enoch.

Again, he that walks with God is one of *God's dear children*. He looks upon Him as his Father, and as such he loves Him, he reveres Him, he rejoices in Him, he trusts Him in everything. He makes it his constant study to please Him, and whenever he has offended, he sorrows over his offence with a true childlike sorrow. He thinks that God knows better than himself what is good for him, and so in everything that happens—sickness or health, sorrow or joy, riches or poverty—he says to himself; “It is well: my Father sends this.” Such a one was Enoch.

Again, he that walks with God is one of *God's witnesses*. He never hesitates to stand forward on the Lord's side. He is not content with giving his own heart to God, but he is also ready and willing to bear his testimony in public on behalf of the cause of righteousness and truth. He is not ashamed to let men know whose servant he is; he will not be turned aside from raising his voice against sin for fear of giving offence. Such a one was Enoch. His lot was cast in evil days; but did he join the multitude? Did he walk in the way of sinners? Did he hold his peace and say, I can do nothing? Far from it! He thought not what his neighbours liked, but what his Lord required. He sought not to please the world, but to please God; and therefore, living in the midst of sin and corruption, he was separate from it. He was a witness against it; he was as the salt of the earth; he was as a light shining in a dark place.

Ay, and he was a plain speaker, too. He made no excuse about youth and temptation; he did not let men go to hell for fear of being thought uncharitable, but he told them openly of their danger; and when they were living wickedly and carelessly, as if there was no God and no devil, he said, as the apostle Jude relates, “The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds.” No doubt he was thought a troubler of the people, and a disagreeable man; but he was a witness, and so he declared continually: “The Lord cometh”; whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear, there shall be a day of account, sin shall not always go unpunished—repent, for the Lord cometh. This was the burden of his testimony. He walked with God, and so he was a faithful witness.

But I say further, to walk with God is to walk in *God's ways*, to follow the laws He has given for our guidance, to look on His precepts as our rule and our counsellor, to esteem all His commandments concerning all things to be right; to fear turning aside from the narrow path He has set before us for one single instant; to go straightforward, though all things seem against

us, remembering the word on which He has caused us to hope.

And to walk with God is to walk in the light of God's countenance; to live as men who remember that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, that the darkness is no darkness with Him, and remembering this, to aim at never thinking or saying or doing anything we should be ashamed of in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts.

And to walk with God is to walk after the Spirit—to look to the Holy Ghost as our Teacher, to lean on Him for strength, to put no confidence in the flesh, to set our affections on things above, to wean them from things on earth, to be spiritually-minded.

But truly, beloved, I might keep you here all day, and yet the half would not be told of the things which are contained in walking with God. To walk with God is to walk humbly confessing ourselves unworthy of the least of all His mercies, acknowledging that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, that we are constantly coming short and backsliding, that we are unprofitable servants, and without His grace are sure to fall. It is to walk circumspectly, bearing in mind our besetting sins and temptations, and avoiding all places and companies and employments in which we are likely to be assailed by them. It is to walk in love towards all, both God and man, full of the mind that is in our heavenly Father, kind and affectionate and gentle to everyone, yea, even to the unthankful and the evil. To walk with God is to serve Him as a habit, continually; we are not to walk with Him on a Sunday and forget Him on a weekday; we are not to walk with Him in public but not in private; we are not to walk with Him before ministers and good men only, but in our own families and before our own household.

And lastly, to walk with God is to be always going forward, always pressing on, never standing still and flattering ourselves that we are the men and have borne much fruit; but to grow in grace, to go on from strength to strength, to forget the things behind, and if by grace we have attained unto anything, to abound yet more and more.

Beloved, this is a very faint picture of a walk with God, but time will not allow me to draw another stroke. This was some part of Enoch's character; this was in some degree the meaning of the record God has given us about him.

Oh, it is a simple but a weighty record! No doubt there were many great and many wise and many noble in those days; but all we know of them is that they lived and they died and they begat sons and daughters. Of Enoch only is it written that he walked with God. Oh, this walk with God, beloved! It is the only talent which will never fail us, the only treasure which will prove eternal, the only character which will serve us beyond the

grave; and in the day when names and titles and honours shall sink to nothing, and all shall stand upon a level, the poorest and the humblest in the land shall be more highly honoured than the mighty and the rich, if he has walked with God and they have not; the first shall be last and the last first.

Comfort ye, comfort ye, all that belong to Christ's little flock; comfort ye, all that are thinking first about your souls; others may live in courts and palaces and have the praise of this world, but of you it shall be written in the books of heaven, "They walked with God"; the King of kings and Lord of lords was their Shepherd, their Guide, their Companion, their familiar Friend, and your joy shall no man take away.

III. I must now say a few words about Enoch's motive. He walked with God; and you will ask me, "What was the secret cause of it, what was the hidden spring and principle which influenced him, that we may go forth and do likewise?" Beloved, God has told us plainly in the Epistle to the Hebrews—it was faith. Faith was the seed which bore such goodly fruit; faith was the root of his holiness and decision on the Lord's side—faith without which there has never been any salvation, faith without which not one of you will ever enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now this faith is no mystery; it is neither more nor less than a thorough belief of the heart.

Enoch believed that as a child of Adam he was himself born a sinner and deserving of nothing but wrath and condemnation; he believed that his first parents had forfeited all right to eternal life, and that he as one of their descendants had inherited a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He did not merely look upon himself as naturally very thoughtless and liable to be led away by bad company, and the like, as many of you are content to do, but he went further, he looked within and laid the blame on the old Adam, the corrupt fountain of his own heart; he really believed himself to be a miserable sinner.

But Enoch believed that God had graciously provided a way of salvation, that He had appointed a great Redeemer to bear our sins and carry our transgressions and bruise the serpent's head. He saw clearly that without this he had not the slightest chance of being saved, whatever he might do; he looked far forward, and in his mind's eye he saw a long way off the Messiah that was yet to come to pay the ransom of the world, and he built all his hopes on Him. Enoch believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Enoch believed that God was a God of perfect holiness, "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." He never held with those who said, "You are righteous overmuch, the Lord will not be so very particular, we need not be so very strict, men cannot be always keeping watch over themselves; "for he trembled at the thought of allowing himself in any shadow



of impurity or unrighteousness; and though he never dreamed of setting up his own works as anything worth, though he rejoiced in the hope of salvation by free grace, still he believed that he who walks with God and would have eternal life must be holy even as He is holy.

And Enoch believed that God would one day come to judge the world and give to all men according to their works. Though iniquity abounded and the love of many waxed cold, and all things seemed to go on as if God took no notice of this earth, he still believed the Lord would come to take account in such an hour as no one expected Him; in faith he saw the judgment close at hand, and he walked with God as one waiting for it. He lived as if he felt this was not his rest; he looked beyond the things which are seen to that abiding city which remaineth for the people of God; by faith he saw that heaven was his only home and in the Lord's presence alone was fulness of joy. Such was the ruling principle which possessed this holy man of old. Oh that you would pray earnestly for a like precious faith! Without it you will never walk in Enoch's way, and so you will never come to Enoch's end.

IV. And this leads me, in the last place, to speak about Enoch's end. We are simply informed in the text that "He was not, for God took him." The interpretation of this is, that God was pleased to interfere in a special manner on His servant's behalf, and so He suddenly removed him from this world without the pains of death, and took him to that blessed place where all the saints are waiting in joyful expectation for the end of all things, where sin and pain and sorrow are no more.

And this, no doubt, was done for several reasons. It was done to convince a hard-hearted, unbelieving world that God does observe the lives of men and will honour those who honour Him. It was done to show every living soul that Satan had not won a complete victory when he deceived Eve; that men may yet get to heaven by the way of faith, and although in Adam all die, still in Christ all may be made alive. Yes, beloved, Enoch walked with God, and so God took him. Here was a splendid and a comforting assurance that the Lord's eye is upon all His children, that there is a heaven and a life to come, that there is a reward for the righteous, though men may laugh at them, and their walk is not fashionable, and their way is spoken against and their seriousness is despised. Oh, cast not away your confidence, ye that walk with God: it is but a little season and He that shall come will come and take you to an everlasting rest.

And now, beloved, I do beseech you all, if you care about your souls,—if you really desire to go to heaven,—if you really have the slightest wish to die in peace, and rise in glory, and join the company of the just,—I do beseech you ask yourselves the question, "Am I walking with God? am I

in that way which Enoch and all the saints have walked in? How many among you have one grain of that living faith which guided this holy man's feet into the way of peace?

Would you have me suppose they are walking with God who live in any known sin which the Bible condemns? Are they walking with God who regard Him and His service in the second place and the care of this world's matters in the first? Are they who never think, and say to each other "Never mind this anxiety—I dare say we shall be right at last"? Are they who neglect any means of grace which God has placed within their reach, or let the most trifling excuse prevent their using it? Are they who profess to know the Lord and believe in Jesus, but do not make Jesus their example? Oh! no, no! It is impossible; all such must be walking away from God; day after day they get farther from Him, and at last, unless they turn, they will walk into hell.

And when I see men going towards this place of torment—for all must be who are not walking with God—when I see the loving and tender-hearted Lord Jesus holding out His hands and saying, "Come unto me: why will ye die? I can and will cleanse you from all sin!"—when I see all this, and find you cold and undecided, and flattering yourselves you are in a middle path and tolerably safe, I must cry aloud and spare not, and run the risk of being thought uncharitable, if by any means I may awaken you and deliver you from the power of Satan and guide you unto Christ. Oh that your hearts may be stirred within you, that you may never rest till you are in Enoch's way and have some portion of Enoch's faith!

Think not to put off the question by saying these things cannot be true. Go to your Bibles and see what they testify. They that are utterly deceived and blind may tell you that punishment is not eternal, and hell is a delusion, and the devil a lie; but they will find to their cost they are all true, most fearfully true, and so long as you attend the worship of the Church of England, which only appeals to Scripture, you must not expect to hear of any other way than that which Enoch took.

Think not to say, "We cannot walk with God: we mean well in church, but when we get outside the world lays hold upon us, and acquaintances and evil company turn us aside." Oh, be honest with yourselves! This is as much as saying "If all the world be religious we will be religious too, and not till then"; in the meanwhile you do not like to be singular, you cannot make up your minds to be in earnest, you think I may be mistaken, you will go with the stream, you will walk according to the course of this world. But look at Enoch: his heart was naturally like yours; the same grace which strengthened him can strengthen you,—the Lord's hand is not shortened; by grace he walked with God three hundred years, and surely you may trust

the power of God will keep you also through faith unto salvation for three-score years and ten. But know that if you cannot be saints on earth you never can be saints in heaven.

Think not I am shutting you up without hope. What though it be true that few are saved and the way is narrow?—there is nothing to prevent any of you entering it, except your own unwillingness, your own unbelieving hearts, your own indifference. Oh, begin to walk as Enoch did! Come to the Lord Jesus Christ! He that cometh to Him shall never hunger, he that believeth on Him shall never thirst: though your past life may have been that of Esau or Manasseh or Judas or Mary Magdalen, come to Him repenting of everything, and He will never cast you out. Take with you words; and say, “Lord Jesus, I have sinned; I do repent, I put all my trust in thee: Lord receive me, Lord increase my faith,” and then the word of God is my warrant for saying He shall give you His Holy Spirit, and you shall walk with Him and before Him and after Him, and rest with Him.

Are you old!—then walk with God; and be in haste: your next step may be in hell; thank the Lord you are not there yet. You have but a short time; you hang by a slender thread; Jordan is before you, and you will never cross in safety unless the ark is with you, and the ark is only with those who walk with God.

Are you young?—then walk with God, and be in haste. Do not put it off a single day. Young people die as well as old. Young people have precious souls to save as well as others. The devil, who rejoices to see so many of you neglecting private prayers and private reading of the Bible, has an especial eye to you: he knows if he can only prevent you thinking while you are young, he has a better chance of making you his own forever.

O let it not be written of you in the books of God that on this Sabbath day you came together not for the better but for the worse; you were invited to walk with God, and would not: let it not be in vain you have heard this history of one of the Lord’s elect; but cast aside your old habits, arise to newness of life, even as the face of the fair country around you is renewed at this season of the year; and be ye followers of Enoch even as he followed God.

Remember, all of you, the prophecy he spake: “the Lord cometh, to execute judgment.” This earth, lovely and fair and shining as it seems, shall be burned up; but your soul shall live forever, either in heaven or in hell: this very Church shall crumble into dust, but they that sleep around it shall rise again, bone shall come together unto bone, and all stand before the throne and be judged according to their lives. The Lord grant you may all find mercy in that day; but if you would find it, you must walk with God, and

then indeed you shall live by faith and sleep in Jesus and have your portion with the spirits of just men made perfect.