

Remember Me For...
October 4, 2015

Have you ever come across any interesting epitaphs, those little comments on a gravestone? There are a lot of variety in gravestone epitaphs. Some tell how the person died, like the following.

Here lies Clyde whose life was full, until he tried to milk a bull.

Epitaph of Harry Edsel Smith,
Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down. It was.

Here lies the body of Samuel Crane. He ran a race with a passenger train.
He got to the crossing and almost across. Sam and his car was a total loss.
Sam's spirit now tolls his knell, that Sam is on his way to... well...
If he only took time to stop, look, and listen, he'd be living now instead of missing

Here lies Butch. We planted him raw. He was quick on the trigger, but slow on the draw. ~Silver City, Nevada, cemetery

Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake; Stepped on the gas instead of the brake.
~ Uniontown, Pennsylvania cemetery

Some epitaphs say something about where the deceased might have gone,
The winter snow congealed his form, but now we know our uncle's warm.

Some epitaphs speak of an occupation.
View this gravestone with gravity. He is filing his last cavity.

Attorney John Strange had this to say about himself: "Here lies an honest lawyer.
That is Strange." ~ A tombstone in England

Some are just funny.
Here lies Johnny Yeast. Pardon me for not rising. ~ Ruidoso, New Mexico

I told you that I was sick! ~ Georgia Cemetery

She always said her feet were killing her, but nobody believed her.
~ Virginia Cemetery

Some epitaphs give hints to what the person's life was like.
The children of Israel wanted bread, and the Lord sent them manna.
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife, and the devil sent him Anna.

Some epitaphs speak of the person's character.
Here lies a man who did no good, and if he'd lived he never would.
Where he's gone or how he fares, nobody knows and nobody cares.

He slept beneath the moon, He basked beneath the sun,
He lived a life of going-to-do, and left with nothing done.

In most of the cemeteries I've examined gravestones in, the stones are rather plain and don't say much. Most just have a full name and the dates of birth and death. Few have more than that.

There are gravestones, of a sort, in the Bible. There are lists of people who lived long ago. For most of the people, not much is recorded about the person other than the father's name and the son's name. Some tell how long the person lived, or, in the case of kings, how long they ruled. It is rare that anything else is mentioned.

But we're going to look at a couple this morning where something more is mentioned. The first is in Genesis 5. In this chapter is a list of the lineage of men from Adam to Noah. Nine men are mentioned. For each man we learn how old he was when his first son was born, that each had other sons and daughters, and how many years he lived. There is only in the list one who has anything more written about him.

Genesis 5:21-24 (NIV) When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Here is one of only two men in all history who never died. Enoch is one; Elijah, the prophet, is the other. Enoch did not see death but was taken up directly to heaven by God.

But the more encouraging fact, for us, is that twice it says in this account that, **Enoch "walked with God."** This use of the word walk is figurative. It is used this way in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, the missionary, Paul, tells us to walk with God. **It means to live in close fellowship with God.**

There is an old story about a little girl who was telling her mother the story of Enoch. Remember that little children are literal thinkers. She said, "Enoch used to take long walks with God. One day he walked so far God said, 'It's too far to go back; come on home with me.'"

While this idea of walking with God is to be taken figuratively, there are lessons in it for us. Let me suggest several things implied in the idea of walking with God.

First, it means going in the same direction as God. God created us for His own purposes and is revealing to us, in His own way, what those purposes are. The person who walks with God seeks to learn what God wants us to be doing and does it.

Fifteen years ago, a Bible study book came out that was titled, Experiencing God. Millions of copies have been sold in many different languages. The basic premise of the book is that, as Christians, we should look around us to see what God is doing and join in. In a sense, that is what Enoch was seeking to do with his life.

The second thing implied in the idea of walking with God is **to keep in step with God.** You cannot walk with somebody if you do not keep in step with him or her. If you do not keep in step, problems occur.

We had a problem with our youngest son whenever we went for a walk. He was constantly moving sideways across our path. So we had to stop or bump into him. I think he'd get to talking and not watch where he was going. It did not matter if he started on the right, the left, or in the middle, he would drift sideways. He wasn't keeping in step with us.

How many of us are like that. We are walking with God, but we are not keeping in step with Him. And God has to keep correcting us. Maybe you want to walk ahead of God and set the direction, instead of letting God determine the where to walk. Maybe you keep drifting to the side, distracted by the things of the world. Maybe you keep lagging behind. You need to work harder on keeping in step with God.

A third thing implied in the idea of walking with God is that **Enoch had a right relationship with God**. To walk together means they were on good terms with each other. Enoch was not without sin, but he dealt with his sin by bringing it to God and seeking forgiveness.

So Enoch walked with God. That is about all we know of him, but it is a significant thing. His is an instructive epitaph for us. His epitaph serves as a model for us. His epitaph can help us connect with God too.

Let's look at another Bible epitaph.

Genesis 10:8-10 (NIV) Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar.

This sounds like a glowing epitaph, and in some ways it is. Nimrod was a great warrior and hunter. Up until that time, most kings were not rulers over vast countries. Instead, they were more like chiefs over a valley or a city. As such, one of the king's duties was to lead the army if they were attacked. He also protected the people under him from wild animals. Wild animals like lions and bears could do great damage if they started wandering down from the hills. So a king needed to be a warrior and hunter.

Nimrod was the best of the best at both fighting and hunting. He was so good he made a name for himself as a hunter. So, if someone else showed some skill at hunting, they might compliment the person by saying he was "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord."

There is some tradition that Nimrod was not a very good person, that he served only himself and not God. This springs from two things. The first is that his name means "we shall rebel." The second is a very old tradition that it was his idea to build the tower of Babel. So we don't really know the story of Nimrod, other than that he excelled at fighting and hunting, and attracted others to him to build himself a small empire of sorts.

While his example might be an encouragement for sports or leadership, there isn't really much there to emulate. Most of us will never be outstanding in anything. Most children grow up to be like us, average adults. Some could make a name for themselves doing

something great or significant. They might invent something or discover something. But most will not. While being a great warrior or hunter might be a good thing to be remembered for, it isn't very helpful for us.

Some epitaphs are meant to be funny or cute. But maybe it would be better to help people to connect with God. Instead of just leaving a laugh behind us, it would be better to help people know how to live. Two of the most important questions people can ask, and are asking are: **How should I live today? How should I relate to God?**

For this I would point you back to Enoch's epitaph. His name means dedicated. And he lived up to that name by walking with God. I am sure others walked with God to some degree. Surely there were others who modeled for Enoch what it meant to walk with God. And Enoch listened. Enoch learned. Enoch decided that he would also walk with God.

And he walked with God so closely, with so much dedication, that he became known for walking with God. What a wonderful thing. What a great testimony.

We read here of two epitaphs... two lives... two people who stood out, one for physical things and one for spiritual things. One pursued this world, pursued his own kingdom. The other pursued a different world and God's kingdom.

How about you? **If you died today, for what would you be remembered?**

What most stands out about you? How will you be remembered?

You have probably heard of the Nobel peace Prizes that are awarded each year. Perhaps you did not know the story behind them. There were begun by a man named Alfred Nobel. He was a Swedish chemist who became rich by inventing dynamite and other explosives.

In 1888, his brother Ludvig suddenly died. Several newspapers mistakenly published stories that Alfred had died. One French obituary announced, "The merchant of death is dead!"

Alfred Nobel read his own obituary and discovered that the one thing that he would be remembered for was inventing explosives that were used by the military for destruction and death. Nobel decided that he wanted to be remembered for promoting peace, not destruction, so he resolved to use his fortune to award accomplishments that benefited mankind.

If you died today, for what would you be remembered? Does your hobby stand out? Is that what people will remember about you?

Maybe they will remember your character. Will they remember your good character, like honesty, faithfulness, or integrity? Will they remember your character flaw. Are you hot tempered, a liar, or a constant complainer?

Will they remember what you accomplished? Did you win an award, set a sports record in high school, or maybe invented something?

For what will you be remembered? For what do you want to be remembered?

Epitaphs seem to be mainly one of two forms. Either someone else writes something about you or you write something you want to say.

One woman, in thinking about reading her gravestone, wrote, "The first thought that crossed my mind was: Please move over; you're standing on my wrist bone. But then I thought that was hardly serious enough. The point after all, was to find the phrase that either summed up my life, or gave my parting message."

What do you want, a summary by others, or a statement of your own?

For myself, I want to be known as one who helped others walk with God. This is the vision God gave me as a pastor was to help you walk with God.

Walking with God involves praying throughout your day. At any moment there may be something to praise about God, something to thank him for, something to confess, some need to ask God to fill. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing.

An example is in Philippians. Paul is talking about one of his spontaneous prayers of walking with God.

Philippians 1:3 (NIV) I thank my God every time I remember you.

What a great impact on another person's life. What a wonderful way to be remembered!

Helping others connect with God is what being a witness for Jesus is all about. And one kind of witness is an epitaph. Enoch's epitaph was a witness.

People died this week. Some died tragically, suddenly, unexpectedly. There was no time or reason to think about an epitaph. Someone else will write it.

Think this week about how you want to be remembered? Think about what you want to be remembered for. And take steps to be that kind of person.

But mostly, I pray that this week, as a part of this task, you will choose to walk with God.