

Sermon to the saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, September 23, 2018

This morning I'd like to offer a few remarks and observations about our spiritual brother Enoch. I'm talking about that Enoch who was the seventh from Adam, as opposed to that Enoch who was the second from Adam – Cain's son, who was born to him after he murdered his brother Abel and went out from the presence of the Lord. Few words are written in scripture about our brother Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and yet the words that are written of him and that are attributed to him are a fertile field to mine for us in our pilgrim journeys today. Scripture shows us that brother Enoch is known primarily for three things: his prophesy(s), his testimony, and his translation. I have had some things to say in the past on his translation, and Lord willing, will have some more to say in the future – but not today. My hope today is that by looking at what we can see about our brother, teacher and friend, in terms of his prophesy(s) and his testimony, we may see some practical application to that learning for us in our walk.

The Lord kindly laid out the years of men's lives for us in scripture – Genesis 5, for instance, lays out the lifespans and number of years between the Biblically-significant members of generations from Adam to Noah in Genesis 5:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; 2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. 3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: 4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: 5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. 6 ¶ And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos: 7 And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters: 8 And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died. 9 And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan: 10 And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters: 11 And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died. 12 And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel: 13 And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters: 14 And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died. 15 And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared: 16 And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters: 17 And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died. 18 And Jared lived an hundred sixty

and two years, and he begat Enoch: 19 And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 20 And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died. 21 ¶ And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: 22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: 24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. 25 ¶ And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech: 26 And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters: 27 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died. 28 ¶ And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: 29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. 30 And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters: 31 And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died. 32 And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth. - Gen. 5:1-32

Some of you younger folks might immediately take notice of how long these of our spiritual forefathers were reported to have lived, relative to the brief average lifespan in today's world. Some may even harbor doubts surrounding the truth of these ages because your brief experience tells you that such numbers seem too fantastic to believe. Please be careful here. While I haven't come across anyone who can say, in all certainty, everything there is to say about the significance of both those long lifespans and any specifics about the 'numbers,' I would like to offer a couple of observations that I think we can make.

First, those years are years and are counted in the same way that years were counted later in the Bible - and further, all the way up to the way we count years now. You can study the history of calendars and you will probably find that the Hebrew calendar, which would have been in place around the time of the Holy Spirit's penning of the first 5 books of the OT by the hand of Moses, was a 12-month lunisolar calendar – which means that it counted months by the lunar cycle and years by the solar. That way of counting ultimately would put things a little out of whack and would slide the same dates into different seasons over time, so they would use what is called an intercalary month, in somewhat regular intervals, to right the ship. Later, in the Hellenized world of the Jews (and Christians), the Roman calendar, which dissociated a month from the lunar cycle (and further righted the dating by use of a 'leap year'), was adopted. While such details might be interesting to some, they are ultimately irrelevant. A year was and is a year, from a Bible perspective. There was no dramatic shift as to what counted as a year, or how

a year was counted, neither from before the flood to after the flood, neither at any other time in Biblical history or since. So those men really lived that long, and there are no cute, intellectual arguments that hold water to the contrary.

Second, I think it is important to note the long spans of overlapping years that these men shared. It really jumps off the page for me that since Adam lived 930 years, he would have lived as a contemporary of Enoch's for 308 years! The first-hand accounts of all that Adam had experienced and learned in his life, from the Garden, to his fall, to his expulsion from the Garden and subsequently living with the curse of God upon him (he being the only one, save Eve, who lived both without and with that curse in his mortal lifetime), to the gripping spiritual drama of Cain and Abel, would have no doubt been readily available to Enoch and recounted many times over the years. Talk about a teacher. And even though Enoch's translation (we will get into that) happened before Noah's birth, Noah's years would have overlapped with those of Enoch's son Methuselah by 656 years! All of what Enoch had seen and experienced during his time on earth, in walking with God, would have no doubt have been the subject of many of Noah's talks with his grandfather (remember, back in those days, social interaction meant that people would actually sit down, look one another in the eye, and talk comfortably with one another at length and on a variety of subjects – rather than just sit near each other while each stares at his own device).

Finally, although it is not directly on point to our focus on Enoch this morning, I'd like to offer the following detour observation about the obvious drastic lowering of lifespan of man after the flood and following. In Genesis 6:3, we read the following:

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. – Gen. 6:3

There are those who hold the view that God pronounced here, because of the sinful ways of man, that He will be lowering their average life expectancy down to 120 years (and subsequently down to 70-80 years in Ps. 90:10, which we will get to in a moment). I have looked at this for a while, and this view doesn't seem to reflect either the context in which it was written or subsequent Biblical truth that we can see ourselves. This view seems to hold to a strict chronological reading of the Genesis text, and I just don't think it is there. I will not, at present, get into verses 1, 2 and 4 of Genesis 6 (which I think all bear on verse 3)– I have been looking into those verses for a while and the Lord just hasn't given me all the goods there, yet. If the Lord wills, I may turn to focus on those verses in a later sermon. For today, if we look at the

context of Genesis 6:3, I believe this verse is connected to verses 5-7, as well as the whole story of Noah and the flood:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. – Gen. 6:5-7

I believe that it is clear (for reasons I will get to in a moment), that the pronouncement made by the Lord at Gen. 6:3 had to do with how much longer He was, in His mercy, giving man before he was going to wipe out mankind, save a few blessed souls, in the Flood. Those who suggest that Gen. 6:3 is dealing with the pronouncement of a new lifespan for man maintain that (at least) all of the first 7 verses of Genesis 6 had to happen **after** Genesis 5:32 in time (or follow a strict chronological reading of the text), which I believe is simply not true. Let us return to the last verse of Genesis 5 for a moment:

And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth. – Gen. 5:32

That Noah lived 500 years before his three sons were born is sure. That his sons were born (and that he had lived at least 500 years before the pronouncement at Gen. 6:3) is far less than certain, especially given the context. The argument goes that since Noah entered the Ark at 600 years of age (which we know for sure – Gen. 7:6), and he was already 500 (or older) at the pronouncement of God concerning man's days being 120 years (which we not only don't know for sure, but doesn't fit with the rest of the context), then the 120 years could not be presaging or prophesying of the time left before the aquatic demise of both man and beast (because there are far fewer than 120 years between the two events). There is no necessity laid to presume that the entirety of Gen 6 happened after the entirety of Gen 5. Consider a further example of this 'layover' between Gen 1 and 2. Notice the additional details about the creation of Adam and Eve that were provided in Genesis 2:4-25, after a lengthy description of the creation that was given in Genesis 1. It is clear that Genesis 2:4-25 did not occur after Genesis 1. The creation account in Gen. 2:4-25 merely overlaps the creation account given in Genesis 1. This reveals that the book of Genesis is not always strictly chronological. I believe the beginning of Genesis 6 does not follow Genesis 5 chronologically. The purpose of Genesis 5 is to provide a genealogical account of lifespans and generational spans from Adam to Noah. It would be awkward and strange to interrupt the genealogical account, right near the end of it, to insert a prophecy about the destruction of the world by a flood. Thus, there is no discrepancy for the event described in Genesis 6:3 to have actually occurred prior to Noah's five hundredth birthday and the births of his children. Further, note that the birth of Noah's sons is actually given again six verses later in

v. 9-10 (and outside of the context of a genealogy). I think this implies that Genesis 6:3 occurred prior to the birth of Noah's sons. There is no question but that lifespans shrank dramatically after the flood, but many people lived far longer than 120 years after the flood, including Sara (127 yrs. – Gen. 23:1), Abraham (175 yrs. – Gen. 25:7) and Jacob (147 yrs. – Gen. 47:28).

Finally, the Lord **does** make specific pronouncement as to the average lifespan of man later in a Psalm, and therefore how we should look upon that brief vapor of time in this fleshly tabernacle:

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. – Ps. 90:10-12

We have so little time to apply our hearts to wisdom. This is an exhortation to seek the Lord and not waste our time in the vanity of our minds.

So back to Enoch. The book of Jude gives us a fairly detailed and delightful nugget about the prophesying of our brother:

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. – Jude 14, 15

This is clearly an end-time prophesy (please read the rest of Jude yourselves later for more context concerning 'these' and 'their'). So three things about the prophesying of Enoch here (and here we are talking about the specific foretelling of events as directly given from the Spirit of God to the ear and heart of the prophet, and then preached from there). First, we are talking about the **seventh from Adam** prophesying of the second coming of Christ **well before** the flood of Noah! Enoch was a Christian! All the 'heroes of the faith' spoken of in Hebrews 11 were! There were no vague notions – as evidenced by this prophesy, the things of Christ were spoken of to Enoch in a manner quite clearly and in detail – though in time quite distant. These are things that Enoch spoke to his sinful generation. From Adam (animal skins at Adam's fall) to Enoch, and from then to now, Christ has been and is being preached!

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, BUT HAVING SEEN THEM AFAR OFF, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. – Heb. 11:13

Second, Enoch did not *only* prophesy about the second coming of Christ to execute judgment. I believe that he *also* prophesied of the destruction of the wicked in the flood of Noah over 900 years before it happened (or roughly 800 or so years before God pronounced that His spirit shall not always strive with man and yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty). He directly prophesied of the flood in the naming of his own son, Methuselah. This name is basically the Hebrew equivalent of a compound word. And while there are expositors and linguists (including Strong's) that suggest the name means something like 'man with a spear,' there is plenty of evidence to suggest a much more potent and contextualized meaning. The two letter Hebrew sub-root for Meth can and has meant either 'man' or 'death' (I won't get into the details of these differences, but they are there), and the sub-root for the second half of the name has meant 'let fall (or sent) with a purpose' (hence the 'spear'). Many Hebrew linguists maintain that the most accurate original meaning of the name Methuselah, given its sub-roots, is something like 'at his death, it will be sent'. This has Enoch prophesying to his world of contemporaries as well as those who come after him through the naming of his son, much like Isaiah did later in prophesying of the end-time destruction of Christ, as well as the destruction of Judah in his day by naming his sons Mahershalalhashbaz (swift to the spoil, or prey) and Shearjashub (a remnant shall return). Enoch calls his own son 'when he dies it will be sent,' preaching the wrath of God on the backs of their impenitent sin to all his contemporaries. The year that Methuselah died is the same year that the Lord sent the flood to destroy evil men from off the face of the earth. (Some expositors suggest that Methuselah lived longer than any other man's recorded lifespan, signifying the longsuffering of God concerning the wickedness of man. I personally like that suggestion). So, in fact, Enoch prophesied in his day of both the flood before it came (the first time the Lord destroyed man for his disobedience and to show His power and glory) and the second coming of Christ (the last time the Lord will destroy man for his disobedience and to show His power and glory). Brother Enoch prophesied about the bookends of God's wrath! How good is that? How blessed is that?

One more note on Enoch's prophecy concerning the second coming of Christ. Sometimes we see a New Testament writer or speaker refer to a prophecy made by someone whose prophecy has already appeared in scripture. Consider the scripture:

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. – Mt. 13:14-15

In the preceding verses, we see Christ speaking to His disciples after they ask Him why He speaks to the multitudes in parables. Christ is referring to what is already written in scripture concerning what the Lord commanded Isaiah to speak to the people of his time, concerning their rebellion against God:

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. – Isa. 6:9,10

In the instance of Enoch’s prophecy being referred to in the book of Jude, however, there is no earlier scriptural reference of the prophecy being pointed to, or quoted, even though Enoch was clearly written of in the Old Testament and clearly quite a bit about him was known to both Jude and Paul (who is credited with penning the epistle to the Hebrews). The prophecy made by Enoch was clearly known to Jude (and probably most other 1st century A.D. disciples). And we know that all scripture is divinely inspired, so the Holy Spirit certainly can and did make Jude aware of Enoch’s prophecy concerning Christ’s return. The words used by Jude to frame the prophecy are nearly word for word from a writing attributed to Enoch called simply The Book of Enoch (that was relatively recently found as part of the ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’). So, I think it would be fairly safe to assume that Jude, and others, were aware of it, either in snippets by oral tradition, or even by having that writing at that time – and so had intimate knowledge of Enoch’s prophecy. It wouldn’t surprise me if John had it. We know that this is not canon. But the part that ended up in Jude *is*. I have read this book multiple times (both as part of my research for preparing this sermon, and as a resource for looking at a few other notions in Genesis 6 that I may have the privilege to preach on later). It has some pretty interesting stuff in it, including lots of good stuff about Christ, the flood, and the fallen angels.

There are two truths stated in scripture about Enoch that at once thrill me to my marrow and make me hang my head in utter shame. Consider the scripture:

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. – Gen. 5:22-24

And –

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. – Heb. 11:5

Enoch walked with God. And Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God. It kinda leaves a person speechless and breathless. Though obviously interrelated, I'd like to offer a few observations on these concepts separately.

Enoch walked with God. It is written of him two times in a span of 3 verses. Typically, when we see a concept repeated in scripture, it has the effect of underscoring that concept in our consciences. The same was written of Noah:

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. – Gen. 6:9

There are no doubt many of whom this same attribute obtains – and yet this specific phrasing is used to describe these two of our spiritual brothers. So, what does it mean to walk with God? The scripture gives us plenty of evidence, including words from our brother Amos:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? – Am. 3:3

Right out in front is the notion that no one can walk with God unless he is in agreement with the will of God both in his mind and heart and in the doing of that will of God. By will of God here, I mean in the sense of a man's thoughts and actions conforming to what God commands us to think and do (I preached a sermon a while back on God's will, as opposed to man's will, that might be helpful to look at as a refresher on this). And by agreement, I don't mean that you merely know, in the abstract, that God is right about everything. It is an agreement as to both what you should do as to the will of God and that you do it, by preference, as a matter of course in your life. Many a believer (and I mean myself first, here) knows what God's revealed will is concerning some facet of life, delights in it when he is thinking right, but then goes about to have secret, baser motives at times and ducks and covers until such time as God sees fit to chasten us for it. And this chastening might happen again and again. You might have a whole lot of things right and yet you keep stumbling on one particular issue and secretly holding onto it in your pride or your lust. And sometimes we get so deeply ingrained in this folly and secret sin that we actually make an internal argument for ourselves that has our folly making sense or being justified in our minds. This is not walking with God. To walk with God, I think, includes a great sincerity of effort to conform to God's will - to know and approve the will of God without cordial, joyful and continuous effort to conform to it cannot be pleasing to Him. Sin angers God.

We know this. So when we find ourselves in some secret sin (usually not a ‘one-off,’ but something that we are personally prone to), we can either continue in it and build a secret case for ourselves – which is the opposite of doing the will of God – or we can resist it in shame as an affront to God and sincerely seek His face instead.

Walking with God must include the complete permeation of contentment within one’s conscience – the inner man. If you are, in some secret way, discontented with some aspect of your lot – your life’s circumstance, then I don’t think it can be said that you are walking with God. You can’t walk with God if you would rather be doing anything else. Walking with God is a continual thing: I don’t mean to suggest that anyone walks sin-free – as no man can. But walking with God doesn’t mean you take a couple steps alongside Him, and then He is gone - and then a couple miles down the road, you meet back up again. You are walking *with* God. Acting in accordance with His will as if you are in His presence. Doing things heartily, as unto the Lord. Fully delighting in that walk and saying in your heart that any other path with any other being than walking with God would be a lot most miserable is, I think, walking with God. Walking with God is not merely a practical matter. It is a supernatural matter. Arthur Pink has some words, from a sermon titled “Profiting from the Word” that seem to fit in well here: *It is natural to murmur when things go wrong; it is supernatural to hold our peace (Lev 10:3). It is natural to be disappointed when our plans miscarry; it is supernatural to bow to His appointments. It is natural to want our own way; it is supernatural to say, “not my will, but Thine be done” (Lk. 22:42). It is natural to rebel when a loved one is taken from us by death; it is supernatural to say from the heart: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). As God is truly made our Portion, we learn to admire His wisdom and to know He does all things well. Thus the heart is kept in “perfect peace” as the mind is stayed on Him (Isa 26:3). Here, then, is another sure test: if your Bible study is teaching you that God’s way is best, and causing you to submit unrepiningly (without complaint, either open or secret) to all His dispensations, if you are enabled to give thanks for all things (Eph 5:20), then are you profiting indeed.*

The second concept is the testimony that Enoch had: that he pleased God. Is there any better testimony for a mere man? Further, is there any other testimony that a man or woman of God would want? We know that without faith it is impossible to please God:

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. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. – Heb. 11:5,6

This beautiful passage of scripture is pregnant with powerful meaning. Pleasing God is tied directly to faith (which of course is a gift of God) and how we manifest that belief in our lives. Faith in God is isn't just a matter of believing in His existence – it is a belief in His sovereignty: not in the abstract, but in deep, abiding practice as a matter of course in life. It is belief in a sovereign God who actually exists and that every aspect of our reality is overarchingly impacted by that sovereignty (and therefore we are absolutely reliant upon Him in all things – coming unto Christ as little children). Faith in God also means a belief that God is a *rewarder* of them that *diligently seek* Him. There are temporal blessings that God bestows on men, but this reward is singular: eternal life in the blessed, glorious presence of our Creator and Saviour. The suppressed premise here is that faith in God signifies a full acknowledgement in our hearts that *only those who diligently seek Him receive the reward*. This is not a “faith and good works” argument - we are justified by God-given faith alone and no man earns his way to heaven – but diligently seeking God is a matter that we are provoked unto time after time, throughout the scripture. Not staying busy. Not getting a lot accomplished. Not knocking out a lot of lists or projects, nor busying oneself in other men's affairs. These are all manifestations of worldly diligence. Is it not true that giving all diligence, in sincerity and sobriety, and not getting entangled in the affairs of this world or sidetracked by the flesh, secret sins and pride, to *seek God* is akin to walking with God? And is walking with God not pleasing God?

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.
– 1Thes. 4:1

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; - Col. 1:10

The word of God puts a difference between pleasing men and pleasing God. We know that not all pleasing of men is wrong – some of it is actually a manifestation of godliness. When we seek to comfort or aid one another in the circumstances outlined in the parable of the sheep and the goats at Matthew 25 (hunger, thirst, stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned), we please God. Here are some other examples:

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. – Ro. 15:2

And -

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; - Tit 2:9

And –

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. – 1Cor. 7:32,33

Of course, this last example doesn't mean that someone who is married never seeks to please the Lord, but their attention is somewhat divided (though not wholly so), in that they must look to also please their spouses in appropriate ways (ways that comport with the will of God). On the other hand, there are many ways, even amongst believers, in which pleasing men is sinful and corrupting, no matter how good it might feel or how far it might seem to get you:

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: - Col. 3:22

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; - Eph. 6:6

The two times that the word 'menpleasers' appears in the Bible, the context seems pointed at how we relate to our masters in the flesh. There are many more subtle ways that Christians can get caught up in men-pleasing within a called-out assembly of believers, if we are not careful, that are extremely sinful and dangerous. In many instances, being a man-pleaser doesn't feel particularly sinful, in that one can get positive feedback from those who you are seeking to be in the good graces of or be in preference with. And after all, you are doing nice things for people, right? Sinful behavior sometimes feels really good. And if I feel good and I am pleasing you and therefore you feel good, it can be very hard to disentangle from that. But how does the brother over there feel? And even more importantly, how does it land on God? Is He pleased in any of this?

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. – Ro. 15:2

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. – Phile. 1:20

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. – Ro. 8:8

Also, sometimes the desire to please particular people, in order to be or stay closer to or in 'good graces' with that particular person or group of people might mean that you have a corresponding desire [or we could say aversion] to stay away from or not be so close with someone(s) else. This is called being a respecter of persons.

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? – Jas. 2:1-4

So, the example here seems to deal with socioeconomic status, but being a respecter of persons takes many forms. You can be a respecter of persons toward or away from another person. It means to prefer some brothers and sisters over others, and to act in ways that are secretly (or not so secretly) motivated by bolstering those differences. You could fasten on someone who is more talented, or better-looking, or funnier, or wealthier, or is a member of a particular family, and you might secretly prefer them over others, and might be therefore more driven to please them in the flesh and *be* pleased by *their* attention. You also might see someone who is less talented, or more socially-awkward, or less attractive in the flesh, or maybe even someone who is more apt to watch for you, encourage you to sobriety or exhort you to quit a folly – and you might secretly avoid that person. None of this is far-fetched. It is the flesh, and we, as Christians, are not exempt from being susceptible to man-pleasing and being respecters of persons, and are sometimes blinded to such sin, as no one seems particularly harmed by it (at least in our own eyes). Being a man-pleaser or being a respecter of persons is extremely harmful and sinful and can create deep rifts in a body.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; - Ro. 12:9,10

In the course of our walk, God's people do many practical, kind things for one another in our ministering, and we are all grateful to God for the impulse to do that and to not feign love toward one another, as the world does. It is important to not let our kindly ministering carelessly slide into man-pleasing or be a cover for it. None of this is pleasing God, and that is ultimately what we should be about in singleness of heart, that we would have the testimony of our spiritual brother Enoch: that he pleased God.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. – 2Tim. 2:4

Thank you for giving me the privilege to speak to you about the things of God on this day. I love you all dearly.