

Hebrews 11:7 "The Faith Of Noah... Rest In The Ark, Jesus Christ"

Hebrews 11:6-7 ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

As we closed last week we began to see how faith is vital in being able to please God. And when we speak of pleasing God it must be understood in its most comprehensive sense. It's not simply bringing a smile to God's face when we trust Him, but rather pleasing Him entails the ability to share in His life and friendship and fellowship. To please God is to totally satisfy His holiness and righteousness.

And since none of us are able to please God outside of perfect righteousness, it must be understood that pleasing God must first start with His Son in whom He is well pleased. Pleasing God is satisfying His demands for reconciliation. And that is only through the shed blood of Christ.

The means of obtaining this pleasing relationship with God through Christ is faith; not faith in faith, but faith in the work of One who died in our place. To believe in Him and what He did on our behalf is what pleases the Father.

It is true that in Christ we stand in a pleasing or right relationship with our Lord, and yet it must be admitted that there is a sense of bringing a smile to God's face as we trust Him for life.

But as our writer clearly says in Hebrews 11:6, without faith it is impossible to please God. And the faith implied here is faith in Christ. Without faith in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice we cannot, in anyway shape of form, come close to pleasing God and therefore are in a standing which is not pleasing to Him. That standing is condemnation where the wrath of God to be revealed will be the only thing one can look forward to outside of faith in Christ.

This faith is what our writer is dealing with here in our text. And this week we'll begin looking at different aspects of faith found in Noah.

HEB 11:7 "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

First, we'll notice that the thing that moved Noah to action was a warning from God about impending doom. Judgment was about to come upon the earth. And, as is always the case with God, when judgment is spoken of it's in relationship to sin. The people of the world at that time had become so hardened of heart that God was not even considered.

This was demonstrated through their actions. Their lives spoke of rejection of the one true God, and part of their action was a lack of faith in their Creator.

GEN 6:5-8 "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."

Man's wickedness is what God judged. But it was a wickedness that was birthed through the heart of man. Their actions certainly were wicked, but what we see here is that God looked beyond the actions to the root cause which was "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

That which issues from the heart is what God sees. And wickedness of the heart will always produce wicked lives to one degree or another. However, Noah was a man whose heart looked to God by faith. Sometimes we'll read about Noah's ark and conclude that it was this act of making the ark which made him righteous. In a sense it was, but God came to Noah before the flood and considered him righteous.

The only way God could have considered Noah righteous was because Noah had already been trusting God by faith. This reason alone is why "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."

But what we'll notice too is that unlike the rest of the world, at that time, Noah's life must have been a life which demonstrated righteousness that was born out of faith. As I said earlier, there's the tendency to think that the building of the ark was the greatest act of faith for Noah, and it certainly was monumental, but what made Noah stand out from the rest of the world was his desire to please God and walk by faith when no one else would, even before the command by God to build an ark.

The building of the ark was an extension of the good works Noah had already been doing in living by faith. But when we live by faith, and seek God, and desire to please Him, an amazing thing happens; God speaks to us and reveals His will to us.

Today, it is through His written word as the Holy Spirit enlightens and illumines our hearts and minds. He may also speak to our hearts as we look for direction in seeking Him in prayer. But ultimately He will use His word as he prompts us and moves us and uses us for His glory. Noah too, heard from God because he desired to know God and trust Him with his life.

And sure enough, even as God does with His people today, God revealed His will to Noah. He revealed that there was going to be a flood.

Genesis 6:17-21 ¹⁷ "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. ¹⁸ "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ "And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰ "Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. ²¹ "As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."

You can imagine how this must have boggled Noah's mind when God said that something was going to happen that had never been seen by mankind before. But remember, Noah had already been

living by faith. He already trusted that God was faithful and Almighty, and so to trust that God was able to bring rain may have been a new concept, but Noah knew it certainly was not beyond the scope of God's capabilities.

And so, if you trust God and He says it's going to rain to such a degree that it will cover the earth, destroying all life on land, then you would simply acknowledge that God will do such a thing, and by faith you will do whatever He asks.

Genesis 6:22 ²² Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

This is what faith does. It first trusts God at His word and then obeys God. Noah would never have built an ark unless he had trusted that God was going to be true to His word. He fully believed that God would do exactly what He said He would do.

But faith always has feet. And Noah, in his faith, obeyed by doing what God told him to do, which was to build an ark that he and his family might be saved. What's interesting about this is that the faith which Noah possessed was a supernatural faith which was given to him by God, but what Noah did with that faith was vital, to the extent that had he not obeyed, he along with the rest of mankind would have been completely wiped out.

You see, the faith we possess in Christ always works through the means God provides. The means, for example, to our salvation is through the shed blood of Christ. But to say we have faith and not embrace the means of that salvation is useless, just as it would have been for Noah to have claimed to have faith, but then not build an ark.

But remember, Noah was considered by God to be righteous before the flood and before he built the ark. And yet for him and his family to be safe they must put forth the effort to obey God unto their salvation from the judgment to come.

It's no different for you and me in Christ. We are considered righteous by faith in Him, and as such, saved from the penalty and power of sin. And yet, God still provides the means for us to walk with Him, which is by faith. But if our faith is only in word and not deed, then what kind of a faith is it, really?

Arthur W. Pink, quoting Matthew Henry, writes: "Faith first influences our affections and then our actions." Pink goes on to say: "Privilege and duty are inseparably connected, yet duty will

never be performed where faith is absent. Faith in Noah caused him to persevere in his arduous labors amid many difficulties and discouragements. Thus his building of the ark was the work of faith and patience, a labor of Godly fear, an act of obedience, a means to his preservation -- for God's covenant with him (Gen.6:18) did not preclude his diligent use of means. As it was by faith-obedience he prepared the ark, so by faith's obedience came the "saving of his house." God always honors those who honor Him."

This is the same proposition James puts forth in his epistle.

JAM 2:14-23 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder. 20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend."

Abraham had the same faith as Noah. And his faith worked in a way where it followed and obeyed God. This is why James makes it clear that faith without works is really indicative of a faith which is not a saving faith, not a trusting faith, not a faith that sees the impending doom and follows God and His way of escape.

The question we might ask ourselves is are we willing to trust God about future things not seen, so that we are willing to build an ark if God asks us to? Now, obviously we're not going to be asked of God to build an ark to deliver us from a world-wide flood because we know that God is faithful to His word never to destroy the world again by water.

But, what if God asks you to step out in faith with an action that takes you to a jail to visit the prisoners? What if God asks you to

step out in faith to minister to the homeless, or the naked or the hungry? What if God asks you to look beyond your circumstance and trust that He is the Almighty God who has all things under control and asks that we quit trying to take control?

Faith looks to God and builds the ark, whether we fully understand every aspect about it or not. Faith must always be followed by obedience to demonstrate that it is a true faith. Does this mean that if we ever fail God that we don't have faith? No, but it certainly doesn't do much in the way of honoring God with the life He's given us in being responsible people in His Kingdom.

Praise God He knows our weaknesses and frailties and He is able to pick us up and strengthen us for the next task demonstrated through faith in Him. But, He will never stop placing us in situations where we will be urged to practice our faith in practical ways.

I can't think of a more practical act of faith then building an ark to save my family from a world-wide flood. And you know what? It worked just as God said it would. Noah's faith in God saved him and his family, because Noah didn't bend to the temptation to listen to what the rest of the world told him.

And you can bank on the fact that his neighbors and probably people from around the world came to see what this Noah was doing. Keep in mind that word got out of what Noah was doing and why he was doing it. He labored with his family for over 100 years on the ark.

He was 500 years old when he had his first son, Shem, according to Gen.5:32. And then we're told in Gen.6:6 that Noah was 600 years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. But in Gen.6:3 we read, "Then the Lord said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he is also flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Since the flood came when Noah was 600, in all likelihood Noah was a spry 480 years old, which means he started construction 20 years before his firstborn son.

And so in that 120 years there was plenty of time for the word to get out. I'm sure people hundreds of miles away would take their vacations to see this 1st wonder of the world. They may have even gathered their families in front of the ark, and since photography wasn't invented yet, some entrepreneur probably charged a

sheepskin to sketch family portraits to take back home and show their friends.

All kidding aside, I'm sure it was a circus as the unbelieving world scoffed at what Noah and his family was doing. You see, they, together with Noah, had never seen a flood. But unlike Noah, he did see the future through eyes of faith and he was faithful to plead with his fellow-men to trust God and escape the judgment.

This is what Peter tells us in his epistle. 2PE 2:5 [God] did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;..."

In what sense was Noah a preacher of righteousness? Well, Noah knew what it meant to considered righteousness. He knew it was his faith in God which was considered righteous before God. And so Noah certainly preached to people that they must trust God by faith that He would bring this judgment He spoke of, and flee from the wrath to come by entering into the ark.

I suspect that if hundreds or thousands of people decided to enter the ark there may not have been room for them all. Maybe God would have encouraged them to build their own arks. Noah had the blueprints.

In today's world those blueprints would be going for a hefty price. Even among some Christian organizations there would certainly be a donation required for the way of escape found in the gospel. But Noah freely gave the truth and the promise of God that they must repent of their sin and trust God, turning to Him for mercy.

Just as our writer says here in our text in verse 6, "knowing that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

A couple more things I'd like to bring out here in verse 7. Notice that Noah "in holy fear built an ark to save his family." The NAS puts it this way: Noah, ... in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household."

There is something to be said about reverence and a holy fear of God. It is an understanding that just as God is merciful and compassionate and loving, He is also just and One who cannot withhold wrath for sin. Jesus Himself speaks of the Father's wrath toward sinners.

MAT 10:28 "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

As I've said before what makes the gospel such good news is the fact that there is such bad news from which to be delivered. The bad news is that the wages of sin is death and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The good news is that God hated sin so much and yet loved us so much He chose to pour out that wrath on His Son for us.

But it all comes back to faith. Unless we place our faith in that saving act of redemption then like the people of Noah's day, we will all likewise perish. The way of escape has been given by God. What people do with that is the issue. And what they must do with it is embrace it by faith and then live in that faith.

What's also interesting about our text is the way Noah condemned the world simply by putting his faith into practice by building the ark. This does not mean that Noah was himself pouring down condemnations from the top of the ark as people walked by. Since he was a preacher of righteousness, he certainly warned people of the wrath of God if they were to turn from His provision of salvation from the flood.

But, the way in which Noah condemned the world through faith, was in the act itself of building the ark. It stood in stark contrast to the ways of men who decided they didn't need an ark, or God. The fact that the ark existed pointed to a condemnation of the world, because it was built precisely for the saving from that condemnation. To reject it was to accept that condemnation. They condemned themselves.

It's the same today. By simply embracing Christ for our salvation and living by faith in Him, we automatically condemn the world by rejecting the world. And again, you don't need to go out with a sign which reads, "You're condemned". The world knows. Why do you think they react the way they do to Christianity? They know that our message is one which says, "there is no other way to be saved other than through Christ." They know the implied opposite of that message is condemnation.

This is why the world hated Christ and this is why the world hates us. We bring a message of hope. But the hope speaks against the way of the world which brings doom. People prefer to embrace their own way of life rather than the life of God. There may very

well have been people in Noah's day who entertained the idea that maybe God was going to do something spectacular.

They may have thought that Noah was overreacting, or they may have concluded that if such a flood was coming it could certainly be weathered out through some means other than what Noah spoke of, which was God's only way out.

People today do the same thing. Most people believe we're overreacting. 'God would never allow anyone to be sent to hell.' 'In fact if a hell exists only the worst of sinners are found there. I'm not so bad and when I stand before Him He'll certainly let me in to heaven.'

They don't believe God at His word. They try and bend His word to say things He never meant, and therefore they can justify their unbelief. But we must stay true to be preachers of righteousness, as was Noah, who pointed everyone to the Savior and the salvation He promised, which can only be accepted by faith.

There's one more thing I would like to mention about Noah and that is the patience of Noah. For some 120 years Noah was faithful to trust God at His word as he obeyed God and completed the work.

You and I are called to live by faith as well, and yet at times it's not very easy. We try and live patiently as we trust God and yet the temptation exists to try and build our own way out instead of resting in the ark, who is Christ.

I know as a Pastor that it's hard sometimes to wait upon the Lord and allow Him to build His church as He sees fit. We sometimes want to help Him along with our own plans instead of using His. In fact, what I find amazing is that the fruit of Noah's ministry of faithfully preaching the truth given to him by God, was 7 people.

In 120 years of giving people the truth of God's judgment and His provision to escape it, only 7 people trusted and all of them were his family. And yet Noah stayed faithful, like the apostle Paul, to finish the course and find the prize at the end of that journey who was God Himself.

This shows us that it is not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God who alone can change the heart. When we share the gospel of Christ with people and they reject it, they're not ultimately rejecting us, they're rejecting the God who allowed us to bring that message of hope. But in that message of hope there is a message

of judgment, because to reject Christ is to embrace death. And there is no ark any person can build in this world which will deliver from that sure judgment.

The patience we need comes in the same way as our salvation, by faith. We must trust that God will be with us in just the same way He was with Noah. He was faithful to Noah whose faith acted in a way which went forward in obedience and determined that none will deter him from his course which God graciously gave him.

Without patience it's hard to endure, but without practicing our faith in Christ, patience will be a fruit that will be hard-pressed to grow.

GAL 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

There's the tendency to grow weary especially when this world burdens us and saps our strength. But we've been called to build by faith. We have been called, not to build an ark, but to further Christ's Kingdom through His gospel and build each other up in Christ.

1TH 5:9-12 "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

The only people who encouraged Noah were his family. He couldn't depend on the world. But more important than his family was the promise he received from God and the comfort and encouragement he received from God, that what he was doing was worth the effort, and was a righteous work which honored the Lord and accomplished His will.

By faith he went forward together with his family. We too are part of the family of God and believe me the work is worth it as we go out by faith every day in the face of opposition, in the face of discouragement, in the face of unbelief found in the world. It's worth the wait as we look with anticipation for the ark of our salvation to come back for us, Christ Himself.

Don't give up. God is on the throne and if you're in Christ He will never leave you or forsake you.

ISA 40:29-31 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."