

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Noah and the Obedience of Faith**

Scripture: Hebrews 11:7

Code: 1629

We come in our study of Hebrews to the eleventh chapter and the seventh verse. You might turn to that and at the same time stick something in the sixth chapter of Genesis because you're going to be going back and forth tonight.

James said, "Faith without works is dead." And what he means to say by that is that true faith always has actions to support its claim. James talks in the second chapter about the man who says - Oh yes, I believe, I believe, I believe - but there doesn't seem to be anything happening in his life to support the genuineness of his so-called faith. And so James says faith in order to be valid visibly must radiate itself in certain deeds. If you really believe God then there will be evidence of it in the way you live. The things you say and the things you do. And that's what he means when he says faith without works is dead.

Now the Bible has always, everywhere, taught that there's only one way to God and that way is by faith. And yet the Bible says a lot about works. Some people have become confused and then determined that you get to God by doing works because the Bible talks about being good and not sinning and being obedient and loving your neighbor and so forth and so on. But what the Bible is saying is that you come to God by faith. And then the genuineness of your faith is established in the eyes of the world by the goodness of your life which verifies the fact that you do believe. No man comes to God by works but all men who truly come to God will give evidence of the faith that they have by the things that they do. And that's the distinction. No man reaches God by good works, nobody is good enough. But works will always be a result of having come to God.

The Apostle Paul simply put it this way, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." Old things are passed away and all things become new. A change takes place so that his faith becomes evidential in the kind of life that he lives.

Now in Hebrews chapter 11 we have the great examples of faith. And in all of the cases of Hebrews 11 there genuine faith was made known by something that they did. Faith in itself is such a fragile, almost ethereal commodity that its only visibility comes in works and deeds that are done. If I say that I believe, you cannot verify the genuineness of that unless you see something going on in my life that indicates that I, in fact, do trust God. And so in the book of Hebrews in the eleventh chapter when all the heroes of faith are listed here in this most marvelous chapter, and there's just one after the other through the whole chapter, we find that all of them are tied together with something they did

in their life that showed that they really believed God. Faith without works is dead, it is indeterminate, it cannot be discerned.

Now in the book of Hebrews this chapter on faith fits in a very important place. At the time that the Holy Spirit wrote the book of Hebrews, Judaism had deteriorated into a works system almost entirely. Judaism in its true character had always been faith. Even in the Old Testament men came to God by faith. But they had begun to confuse it, even as men have in this day and age. And we have all kinds of things under Christianity that are nothing but self-righteous work systems, legalism. But in Judaism the same thing happened. What began as a faith operation deteriorated into a system of works. Why? Because man began to seek his own glory. And in coming to God by faith there's no glory for me. But in establishing a system of self-righteousness man got the glory. And so man's desire for glorification of self twisted Judaism into a works system, just as it has done to Christianity. And you have all kinds of Christian churches today and the people in them and the preachers in them have no connection with God whatsoever but are busy trying to please God on the basis of certain good deeds.

Now in the case of the book of Hebrews the Jews to whom the writer wrote had been in the traditional Judaism bag, and that they had been tied in to the works system. The leadership of Israel was based on legalism, ritualism. They were all going about to establish their own righteousness, as Paul says. They were all going about doing good deeds and thinking that God was keeping score and the goodies out-weighed the baddies and therefore God was happy. They were all busy conforming to rules. They would strain at a gnat, Jesus said, and swallow a camel. In other words, they would make great issue over little tiny nit-picky things and then they would swallow some giant kind of thing that was a moral issue. The same group that wouldn't break sticks on the Sabbath would execute the Messiah. And that shows the distinction. They thought it was a no-no to take some kind of manual effort on the Sabbath, they had no problem killing their own Messiah. They were real good on the little tiny rules, they were terrible on the moral value judgments.

And so Judaism had deteriorated into a system of works. And God hated it as He hates every system of works because it replaces Him with men. As I told you a few weeks ago, we all know that in the beginning God created man and we also know that man since has returned Him the favor. He has created himself into God. Now the whole system of works, reigns kind of in the background in the book of Hebrews. Because in the book of Hebrews the Holy Spirit is saying you must take that old system and set it aside. The whole covenant as good as it was, not only the deteriorated one but the real one, the good one that God gave is set aside now in Christ. He says that Christ is a better priest, with a better priesthood, who mediates a better covenant, who made a better sacrifice, whose blood is full, final and complete and He goes all the way through Hebrews to show how the new covenant in Jesus is better than all the old.

Now He knows also that it's not just enough to present the new covenant in Christ, He must also show them how they can come into the new covenant. They're going to say - Oh, that's fine, I like that new covenant, how do I get into it? There aren't any sacrifices to make, there's no temple to go to, there's no laws to obey of an external nature, there's no ritual connected to it, how do I get into it? And so at the end of chapter 10 verse 38 He says; "Now the just shall live by ... what?...faith." So He says the way that you come and take this wonderful salvation in Christ. the way that you make it your own is not by doing anything it's only by believing. It's only by faith. It's only by saying God, I believe You are, I believe You are a rewarder of them that seek you, I believe the only way I can seek you and find you is through Christ, I come on that basis. That's faith. And He says the just shall live by faith. That's the premise upon which a man enters the new covenant.

But what's so interesting about this is that's a quote out of Habakkuk which is one of their old prophets. That's the same principle of the Old Testament, even in the Old Testament the true saints lived by faith. But they had so long ago forgotten the concepts of faith that He takes the eleventh chapter, forty verses to re-explain faith as a subject to them.

You say - But these were religious people - they knew the old covenant. Yes, but it had gotten so twisted into a works system that they had forgotten the basis of faith. And so for Him to say that the just shall by faith, wouldn't be enough - they'd all say Oh, yeah, faith .... faith ... I remember that word. You see, that was something that had been set aside in a very real sense. And so He must then stop and totally define the theme of faith which He does in chapter 11. And this is the theme of the eleventh chapter - a definition of faith.

Now it's important, as I say, first of all because they had forgotten it. And they had been moving around in a works righteousness system. It's also important for Him to talk about faith the way He does because the Jews were always afraid of something new invading the sacredness of their traditional religion.

Now you know the Jews are very traditional people. The orthodox Jews today do essentially the very same thing they did way - way back, even before Jesus Christ. They hold with tenacity to tradition. And for somebody to come along like the Apostles of the New Testament and announce this was a scary thing. Because it threatened the solidity of their tradition. And that's why they got mad at Jesus and that's why they got mad at Stephen and that's why they got mad at Peter and John and that's why they got mad at Paul. And they accused everyone of them of bringing in something new. And so the genius of the Spirit of God presents faith as a commodity and then defines faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, completely without ever using a New Testament person. He goes right through the heroes of the Old Testament and says -Look, people, this is nothing new. You see the genius of it? He goes from Abel right on out the other end and never talks about anybody but Old Testament characters that they all knew. It's nothing new, He is saying, this is what God intended all along was faith. Let me redefine it so you'll understand what it is you're supposed to be doing.

And so the new covenant is not teaching something new, faith has always been the only way to God. The people in the Old Testament believed God, it says of Abraham he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. All the Old Testament people listed in chapter 1.1, it says by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith, by faith, by faith, and He is just saying this is always the way it's always been. And so it's nothing new. It's nothing new. But it needs to be redefined because they have long ago forgotten it and drifted into a works system.

And He starts, you'll remember, with Abel in verse 4, with the life of faith. And really talks about the entrance into the life of faith. Then He moves to Enoch in verse 5 and talks about the walk of faith. Abel began by faith, Enoch did what? Continued by faith.

Then thirdly, and for tonight, He comes to Noah in verse 7. And Noah illustrates the work of faith. It may say the obedience of faith in the bulletin, either one. The work of faith - Abel is the life of faith, the beginning; Enoch is the walk of faith - the continuance; Noah is the work of faith - the obedience. It's the old song we're beginning to love around here, "Trust and Obey." Noah illustrates faith that is obedient. He is a classic of all classics of believing God. Of saying, I believe God and then doing something to prove it. His faith was not dead because it had works.

The record of Abel shows us the worship of God. The record of Enoch shows us the worship and the walk with God. And in Noah we see one who worshiped God, walked with God, and worked for God. So it just takes us another step. Progressive steps in the relationship of faith.

And it's kind of interesting that faith works that way. You've got to have worship before you can have walk, and you've got to have walk before you can have work. And that's how God has established it. That's the pattern that is divine.

So Noah takes us to the next step. Now in Genesis chapter 6 I want to read you one verse and then we'll go back to there in a minute, but verse 9 there, it says; "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man. He was righteous." He was established righteous by faith. He was perfect in his generations and "Noah walked with God." He was righteous, it says, *dikaios*, it's translated just, it's the same word as righteous, the Greek is *dikaios*, Septuagint. He was righteous like Abel, watch it, he walked with God like Enoch, and he worked with God and that is his singular identity in the listing of Scripture. He was obedient.

I think some people get number one, they come to God by faith, some people get number two - for a while they walk with God. Then some people work for God. That's Noah. Some people believe a lot but don't do anything. Other people really believe God and they are committed to it.

I couldn't help but think of this, and I'm always listening for sermon illustrations, somebody said a preacher is the only person who can use everything he hears, either it's truth or it's an illustration of error. You know, but I was hearing an interview by a particular sports commentator who was interviewing one of the players on the Washington Redskins after the last victory over Dallas, and commenting on the coming Super Bowl, which is coming up next week, praise the Lord, it's at 12:30 ... not only for me but for you ... but commenting on the coming Super Bowl he asked a particular - lineman what he thought his chances were in the Super Bowl. This is what he said - he said, we believe that if we'll just do what Mr. Allen says we'll win. Now that's faith. You get out there in that little trench and you look at those eyes across that line and behind those eyes is 280 pounds of fury, and you just keep banging heads, and you just do what you're told to do, and you'll win. That man believes that. And that's faith. It's not only the faith that says - Yeah - but it's the faith that says - I'm going to get out there and attempt to do it. He's going to get into the battle.

Now the obedience of faith is just that. It's believing that if God says it, and you go do it you'll win. That's the obedience of faith. Now Noah's faith is stupendous. It is absolutely so far beyond the just human rationale that it doesn't even make sense to the normal mind. Unless a man knew God and had some kind of spiritual insights, he would be a blithering idiot to do what Noah did. I mean, he would be on the level of somebody who thinks he's a poached egg, like C. S. Lewis said, he wouldn't have enough sense to come in out of the rain to do a dumb thing like this. I mean, I've driven down Balboa Boulevard many times and seen that giant boat in somebody's backyard there and thought that about the poor guy who lives there. What is he doing building that monster in his backyard? But to imagine what Noah did because God told him what was going to happen when he couldn't see anything past his own trust is absolutely stupendous. He not only believed God - it would have been easy for Noah to say - Lord, I really trust You and believe You but I don't know... this is a little far out. He believed God to the point that he did what was totally irrational because God told him to do it.

Now there are three things in verse 7 that tell us Noah's faith was legitimate. Three great proofs of Noah's faith. One, he responded to God's word. That is always a characteristic of true faith. He responded to God's word. Number two, he rebuked the world. He was such a man of God that his life was a contrast. Three, he received God's righteousness. He responded to God's word, he rebuked the world, he received God's righteousness. And those are three classic indications of true faith. If you find somebody whose faith is real, he will - one, respond to God's word; two, live as a rebuke to the world; three, he will receive God's righteousness which comes to those who believe.

First of all, Noah's faith is valid because he responded to God's word, look at verse 7; "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not yet..not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Stop there.

He believed God. So much so that he built an ark. Now it may have appeared on the surface to be somewhat foolhardy, and we all can imagine what went on with his neighbors and the laughing and

all of that that was going on as he was out there building that thing. But God said to Noah - Noah, judgment is coming. I am going to destroy the world by water. You better build a boat. And you know what Noah did? He dropped everything and spent over a hundred years building a boat. Somewhere in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates River, miles of miles from any ocean, his whole life was one continued concentrated preparation for that which God said would happen. I don't know about you but after 70 or 80 years I'd begin to wonder. I would get a little old working on the same boat. But that's faith. Faith responds to God's word. You see, true faith doesn't question its obedience.

Now the choice is the same for every man, you may live as if the message of God was of little value or else you may live as if the message of God was of absolute importance, the most important thing in the world.

Now Noah was a man like we are, he had a lot of things to do to occupy his time and for him to give up his great gap of life and just spend his time building a boat took some kind of commitment. And it's very likely that he never even understood much about boats because he didn't live in an area where there were ships that went into the sea. But he listened to God and he spent his life obeying what God said. Isn't that amazing? It would have been one thing for him to run out and order the lumber, but it was something else to see him a hundred years later still putting the pitch on. I mean, I think some of us believe God and we run out and we start and then that's it. Never gets much past that. Noah did it and he continued.

Now you'll notice it says - "By faith, Noah being warned" ..and the terms, - of God, - do not appear in some of the best manuscripts, but certainly should be included if not in the manuscripts, in italics because obviously it was God that spoke, "He was warned of God of things not yet seen." That's the test of faith. What does verse 1 say faith is? The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things ... what? ... not seen. He didn't see any water. The Lord didn't rain on him a little bit for an afternoon so he'd get the feeling. He had no idea of what was going on. But it says he was moved with fear. You say - Aha, that's why he did it, God held a big stick over him, and said - You'd better do this or I'll let you have it. Not that. The word fear may give you an erroneous impression that Noah acted under the influence of fright, but the Greek word means to reverence. He did it because he revered God's word. And God told him to do it.

You know what the Bible says? God commands all men everywhere to do what? Repent. Some people believe that and they repent. Some people don't believe it. Noah believed God's word. Some of us as Christians hear the word of God - Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Some of us hear Jesus say - "And lo, I am with you always." Do we believe it? Do we believe we're adequate for every situation if we were obedient? Noah acted with pious care, that's what it means. Pious care, he treated the message of God with great reverence and he prepared the ark. And his faith was honored to the saving of his house. It wasn't only he but his wife and his three sons, Shem, Ham and

Japheth, and their three wives; eight souls were saved.

Now let's look at this incident, going back to Genesis 6, and see some of the fascinating things that took place, Genesis, chapter 6 ... verse 14, we'll start. Listen to this: here's God's talk to Noah, He says - "Noah," verse 14, "make thee an ark," or a ship or a boat, "of gopher wood, rooms shalt thou make in the ark and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." Now there is a challenge to faith on an absolute unprecedented scale. I mean, what would you do if God told you to build a 20,000 ton ship in the middle of the wilderness? One of the greatest acts of faith in the history of the world was when Noah stretched out his arms and chopped down the first tree. What faith, or better yet when he picked up the tool to chop down the first tree. What faith!

Notice this, interesting footnote, the word pitch, there is much allegory and much symbolism in the ark, but here's a beautiful thought, the word pitch in Hebrew is exactly the same word as atonement. It can be translated atonement or pitch. Leviticus 17:11 might read this way, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, for I have given it to you upon the altar to be pitch for your souls for it is the blood that serves as pitch for the soul." Watch this, the ark was safety, the pitch kept the waters of judgment out. And the pitch in the life of the believer is the blood of Christ which secures us from any judgment. There can be no leaks in the ark because of the pitch, and the judgment of God can never touch the believer because the blood of Christ has sealed him from the flood of judgment. It's a great thought.

Look at verse 15; "And this is the fashion," God even gave him a verbal blueprint, "This is the fashion which thou shalt make of it. The length of the ark shall be 300 cubits." And there's quite a bit of variation as to how much a cubit is, whether you're talking about a Jewish common cubit, or a little more sophisticated measurement or whether you're talking about a Babylonian cubit, and it goes everywhere from about 17.5 inches to perhaps 22, but let's stay at the lowest level so that we're being fair and assume that it probably was bigger. But anyway it says it would be 300 cubits, the breadth 50 cubits and the height 30 cubits. That would be 437.5 feet long, 72.90 feet wide, 43.75 feet high, or about 4 stories high. Since it had three decks it had a total deck area of approximately 95,700 square feet, that would be more than 20 standard basketball courts of deck space with a volume the size of one million three hundred and ninety six thousand cubic feet. That's a big ship. Its size puts it well in the category of large, steel, ocean-going vessels today in our modern world. And from the best we can tell it was sort of like a covered raft shaped like a coffin. A rather square and flat bottomed, apparently.

But it's interesting to study these dimensions. There was a lecture at Annapolis given by a particular naval instructor, and it was given to all of the admirals. And in this lecture these were some of the things that were brought out:

For centuries, the man said, men built ships in various proportions. But since British naval machinists found the formula for the battleship "Dreadnought" all naval construction follows the proportions of

"Dreadnought" since they have been found to be scientifically perfect, so said the instructor. Then he said - The proportions of "Dreadnought" were exactly the same as the ark. So God knew how to build ships.

Can you imagine building this thing with no rudder and no power and no sail and no nothing? He had to trust God. Even when the flood came you couldn't go anywhere you wanted to go, you wouldn't know where to go anyway. And I've often thought to myself, - how fortunate that they landed on a flat spot on Ararat and not a slope, that would have been a mess in one area.

Now this took a tremendous amount of faith, verse 17, watch this: "And behold, I, even I," God says, "do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." Now, you know, even that is a little hard to understand. He says it's going to rain. I'm going to bring a flood of waters. Now that isn't just an easy thing to believe. I mean, Noah hasn't even got any idea of what rain is. It has never rained in the earth.

Go back to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 6, it says there...well, verse 5 first; "Every plant of the field before it was in the earth and every herb of the field before it grew for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth." It never did rain. Verse 6, "But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground." There weren't even any deserts there. It was all watered from mist coming up from under neath the ground. It was perhaps covered by this mist and incidentally that's why people lived so long, the sun's rays never got through the mist. It was much like Venus and so people lived for centuries and centuries because we die, basically, as a result of the deterioration process brought about by the sun's rays. And so without the sun's rays people lived a long time. They lived over 900 years, some of them. If you think you're bored with life ... you haven't lived ...

And so people lived under this kind of a mist until finally the flood came and at that point the Bible says He broke up the fountains of the deep, you see. And the whole atmosphere of the earth was changed and man's life was immediately shortened because the penetrating rays of the sun hit directly on man.

Now who in the world is going to expect this to happen? He hasn't any concept of this in his brain. Rain doesn't even fit into any kind of category. And it also seemed very unlikely that God would destroy the whole human race. I mean, it would seem as if His mercy was all swallowed up by His justice. And also the judgment was a long way off, I mean, it was 120 years away. Verse 3 of chapter 6; "His days shall be 120 years." So ... I mean, that's a long way off and Noah could easily have rationalized and Said Well, boy, that sure gives people a lot of time to repent and reform, I mean, they'll probably shape up by that time. And you know what even makes it more unbelievable that Noah did this? Everywhere he went and preached nobody ever believed. When that whole deal



was over with, after a hundred and twenty years, and

that flood came, who got in the ark except Noah and his family? Nobody ... now, I know from the standpoint of a preacher to preach for 120 years and have nobody come is pretty rough. And yet he can imagine that you'd begin to think - I wonder if it's me? I mean, I've gone over this deal a lot of times and nobody buys it.

And can you imagine what he endured while he was out there building it? Well, there's crazy Noah again ... Everybody that went by would laugh at him. And then he probably thought even if the flood comes how is a monster like this going to float? Especially after I've got two of every kind of animal in it. It had no anchor, no mast, no steering, no rudder, no sail and Noah didn't know anything about sailing anyway. And against all this he just believed God. I mean, if you gave it to a church committee, it would never come off. I mean, they'd scratch it on the basis of the clean up crew alone. Now I don't know how God took care of that, I'll leave that one for you.

Verse 18, I'm not going to destroy everybody, God says, verse 18: "But with thee will I establish My covenant." Don't you like that? Mycovenant? God says - You're going to be My man, I'm going to maintain My promise to you ... My promise.

What was that based on? Oh, it goes back to verse 8; "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." He was a just man, perfect in his generations, he walked with God and God says -You're My man, Noah. You and I are going to go through it together. The rest of the world is going to be drowned. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Do you want to know something? Noah didn't have any grace in himself. If the grace wasn't in Noah where was it? In the eyes of the Lord. Grace is strictly God's to give to whom He will.

Nothing in the sinner can appeal to God, Noah was no different than any other son of Adam, he was just as bad as the rest. In fact, just after he got out of the ark, the terrible tragedy of chapter 9 verse 21, he drank of the wine, became drunk and was uncovered within his tent. Noah just really blew it badly. But you know something? The grace of God was in his behalf because it was God's right to give His grace to whom He will. And so God spared Noah and made a covenant with him. It pleased the Lord to be gracious to Noah.

Now watch this, verse 19; "And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort - or every kind or every species - shalt thou bring into the ark to keep them alive with thee. They shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, of cattle after their kind of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every sort shall come into thee .... shall come unto thee to keep them alive and take thou unto thee all food that is eaten and thou shalt gather it to thee and it shall be for food for thee and for them." So God says - Now I want you, after you've built this boat, to get the animals into it. Now God,

of course ... and it must...can you imagine the scene, I mean, just Noah waiting at the door while these animals came from everywhere ... just came. No way to explain the fact that they came other than that God was just herding them into this big thing.

Now someone has calculated that the ark, from a spatial stand-point, could handle easily 7,000 species of animals, which is quite a bit. Now this doesn't necessarily mean that two of every animal in the world. There are animals and then there are species of animals. And even the species of animals can grow and grow and grow and grow until you have all vast amounts that can all be taken back to one basic specie.

For example, take the pigeon. Darwin found, in testing, that if the almost endless varieties of pigeons were put together and allowed to breed together they went back to the rock pigeon. Therefore, if there were only two rock pigeons, or seven likely because there were seven of the beasts that were used for sacrifice, if there were only seven rock pigeons in the ark then there were thousands of varieties potentially within those two rock pigeons. That's true of the dog, for example, if you just had two dogs and took off from there the endless amounts of varieties of dogs could occur as well as the horse, all coming from one horse. And evolution, as weak as it is, will at least grant that. All horses, whether they are Shetland ponies, racing horses or heavy draft horses can descend from one common ancestor. I mean, the entire human race came from Noah and his three kids. And one of them wasn't with slanted eyes and the other one dark and the other one white. And two cattle could well have represented the whole bovine family for that matter.

And so it is very likely that the species were limited and that it's within reason to assume that there was plenty of room for all the species and all the food and ah ... enough extra for the sacrificial animals, they were to take seven of each and there were ten of those, according to Exodus, so that would make seventy extra animals.

Now it has been estimated, and this is fairly recent, that land mammalia, land animals, above the size of sheep at the present only number about 290 species. Those from sheep to rats, about 757. Those smaller than rats, about 1359. So, there you've barely got 2500 species. The average of all the animals, the average size, is about the size of a cat which would require less than two square feet. So it's no problem to get them in there. I mean, it's a problem to get them in but it's no problem logistically. And so here comes this strange, bizarre command. How are they going to get there, how are they going to get fed, who's going to be there to clean the place and so forth, and so forth and so forth, all the massive kind of problems. Because, you remember, they were in that thing for almost a year. So Noah had a command that staggers the imagination. But he was a man of faith. So he began to build.

Verse 22, I love this, "Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Amazing faith...amazing. You know, God comes to men today and He says - Put your faith in Jesus Christ and

I'll change your life ... and some aren't even willing to take God at that simple promise. There are Christians who know and love God, they say, and God says - I want you to take this ministry, I want you to reach that person over here and I'll bless your life for it. I want you to trust Me in the trial that you're going through, I want you to believe Me in this situation that's creating stress and tension, I want you to lean on Me. And they're not even willing to believe God in that situation, let alone build an ark. And we say we believe our faith is absolutely infinitesimal in the measure of that of Noah. So he was a man of faith. Came by faith to God, he walked by faith with God and now he would obey God in faith even though it staggered his imagination to conceive of what God had asked of him. He believed God. And he believed what God said would happen.

Some of us run out of patience so fast, some of us run out of patience with God in a week. God ... I've been praying a week. Noah - a hundred and twenty years. But you can imagine what a day it was when it started to fall. When the sun was shining, Noah's conduct must have looked like that of a fool. When the daylight hours were on and everybody watched. Who in his right mind would build that thing on dry land? But you see, it's often been the case that men who take God at His word look like fools. You may have to adopt a course of action which looks like madness to the world but if it's obedience it behooves us.

My day always used to tell a story about the man who had a sandwich-board sign on and in the front it said - I am a fool for Christ. And everybody laughed. And then as they went by and on the back it said - Whose fool are you? You're a fool for somebody. I'll be a fool for God and win in the end.

So Noah exhibited fantastic faith. What was the ground of his faith? God's word. He believed that God meant what He said. He believed it.

Peter and his fishing partners had fished from sunrise to sun-set. Their labors had been in vain. The Lord entered the ship and said - Launch out into the deep and let down your nets, we're going to catch fish. And, you know, if I know Peter he probably went ... Oh, brother! I mean, I've been out there all day, what's He going to tell me now? See ... oh, I've got to get this boat all the way back out there again? He says - Master, we toiled all night and have caught nothing. Then he catches himself - Nevertheless, at Thy word I'll let down the net. And you remember what happened? He got so many fish he couldn't get them up. You see, he took the word and obeyed it. And even though his faith was about that big God honored his faith.

He ... Noah did what he couldn't see. He obeyed God. And he did it because he believed in God's word and he treated it with great reverence. And you know something? He believed in God's word about judgment, and he believed in God's word about promise. And he believed in God's word about everything apparently. He built that thing like it was supposed to be built. He obeyed God to the very letter. He took it all and did it all. It says in verse 22, "According to all that God commanded him, so did he." He didn't pick and choose his points of obedience.

Spurgeon said this, I quote - "He who does not believe that God will punish sin will not believe that He will pardon it through atoning blood." There are some people who want to believe God about promise but don't want to believe Him about judgment, Noah believed Him about both. Spurgeon goes on to say this, - "I charge you who profess the Lord not to be unbelieving with regard to the terrible threatenings of God to the ungodly, believe the threat even though it should chill your blood. Believe though nature shrinks from the overwhelming doom, for if you do not believe - the act of disbelieving God at one point will drive you to disbelieve Him upon the other points of revealed truth."

And so, Noah believed God that not only was he going to receive a promise but the whole world was going to be destroyed. He believed both. He believed God fully. The first thing, then, that solidifies his faith is he believed and responded to God's word.

The second thing - he rebuked the world, and this is a very simple truth. Look at it in verse 7, don't even need to turn to it if you don't want to, it's in Hebrews 11:7. It says this; "Noah, being warned of God of things not yet as seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house by which he condemned the world." That's the second thing - he rebuked the world. I know he was a man of faith because he was different. The characteristic of the belie...the unbelieving world is just that -they're unbelieving. Whenever you find the man who believes, he is different.

Noah was a preacher, did you know that? You say - What did he preach? I'll tell you, I'll give you a sermon outline .... it's very, very simple. In II Peter chapter 2, I like this. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell, delivered them to chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness." Now you say - Wait a minute, what was his sermon? You know what his sermon was? One hundred plus years building a boat - that was his sermon. Every time they saw him, every time they heard him chop a tree down, every time they saw him walking along with planks on his back, every man ... and he must have hired some who worked for him, was hearing his sermon - judgment is coming, judgment is coming, judgment is coming, judgment is coming. And I'm sure, after years and years and years they became totally indifferent to his sermon. He preached with his life. Every time he felled a tree, every time he sawed a plank, every spike he drove preached a sermon - judgment is coming, believe God for refuge. For 120 years there wasn't any response to his sermon. Yet he rejected discouragement and by faith he went on with a living rebuke of his world. He rebuked his world just because he was a man of faith. The world doesn't believe God, if you do - you'll rebuke it by just believing God.

It's amazing to think that, I'm sure, Noah had many of the men in the town that he paid to work with him because his sons and he could have never carried the massive kind of planks and things that would have been needed for the beams and other things in that ship, he must have had some help. And it's interesting to think that the men who were helping to build that thing never were secured in it.

Just as those men assisted Noah and his sons in building the ark which was to save the human race from total destruction, they took the money and they perished in the flood, so today..and always there are people assisting and building the church by their labor and by their gifts, who are lost and will perish in the doom that comes because they ],re not secured in Christ.

But old Noah preached the message. In Genesis chapter 6, look at his life in contrast. Verse 5, "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." Now that's a bad situation. They had nothing but evil going all the time. God looked down, said I-,his is the verdict - they are rotten, that settles it. Human eyes can see the wicked actions of men, but only God can tell what goes on in his heart. Verse 5 again says; "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Not only his deeds but he was vile on the inside. And God gives us the verdict right there.

Only God could write a sentence like verse 5, because only God could say as Ezekiel 11:5 says; "I know the things that come into your mind." God reads the heart.

Verse 6; "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart." Now God is not taken by surprise, nor does God really change His mind. But here you have an anthropomorphism or you have a statement about God in human terms. From a human standpoint it appeared as if He repented. First Samuel 15:29 says; "The glory of Israel," the name for God, "will not lie or repent, He is not a man that He should change His mind." And so :in ... from God's eyes nothing changed but humanly it appeared though, God had changed His plan. And now He decided to destroy men.

I like the fact, too, that it was not only His justice that was offended in verse 6 but His heart was grieved. Don't you like the Verse 7, "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 Ale that I've made them." Oh, what a terrible, terrible resolution. The race was largely demon possessed. I believe the sons of God that came down and cohabitated with the daughters of men were none other than fallen angels, demons, it was a demon possessed confused race where demonized individuals had cohabitated with women and produced a race of off-beat demon-men, and God came in destruction against that generation.

Go to verse 12. "And God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth." Watch that, they had corrupted His way, which means they knew it and they corrupted it. Romans 1, right? When they knew God they glorified Him not as God but were foolish, vain in their imaginations, worshipped the creature more than the creator. Turned their backs on God. They corrupted His way.

Before you impugn God, remember that God gave them every chance, every chance. But I-, they went their own way. The shortest definition of sin in the world is two words - I will. And man went his own way.

Verse 13, "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them and behold I will destroy them with the earth." I'm going to wipe this thing out, God said. They've all gone their own way. Isaiah 56; "All we like sheep have ... what? ... gone astray, we've turned every man ... where? ... to his own way." The world was rotten. And God said - I'm going to judge it.

You know, throughout the Bible we find God telling His ... His special people, His chosen people about coming judgment. Amos 3:7 is a wonderful verse, it says this; "Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing His secrets to His servants, the prophets." God inevitably would tell somebody that it was coming. a gentle yet a forceful kind of reminder and warning.

You say - Well, it still appears to me that God is awful tough to just come down and wipe out the whole world. I mean, it seems a little bit like that's the end of mercy and His justice has all of a sudden overwhelmed Him. But it isn't so. Listen to this. The fact that God's time of patience will end, watch it, and that He will strike out in justice is the only hope for a sin-cursed world, you see? If God doesn't act to destroy then we face an eternity of sinfulness. People say - Well, how could God come in judgment, how could Jesus come in judgment? My friends, that's my hope. It's my hope that sin gets judged. I don't want to live in a world eternally sinful and vile. I want the world that Jesus Christ has promised. God is holy and just, thus He will destroy. For me He has already destroyed my sin in Christ. But don't you ever think for a minute that there isn't mercy and grace in destruction and judgment - there is. Barnhouse said, and I quote, "Hell is as much a part of the love story of God as heaven is." I don't want to live in a continual earth of sinfulness. But God's judgment is so slow, He's so patient.

Watch this, this is a point that just thrills me. Look at verse 21 of chapter 5. "And Enoch lived sixty and five years," just a kid, "and he begot Methuselah," he had a son. That's great. Now you say - What's the significance of Methuselah? Well, his name is significant. Listen to this, his name means - when he is dead, it shall be sent - hang on to that one, that's worth at least a quarter, when he is dead it shall be sent. Isn't that an interesting thing to name your son? When he is dead it shall be sent ... in -that name is divine revelation. It was as though God said to ]Enoch, - You see that baby, Enoch, that baby you just had? The world will last as long as he lives. Are you with me? The world will last as long as he lives. For when he is dead, then it shall be sent. What shall? The great deluge in destruction that came. So the world was to last as long as the son of Enoch lived.

First Peter 3:10 says this; 3:20 says; "The long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." What was God waiting for? He was waiting for Methusaleh to die. And God said - I'm not going to send

judgment, by, the very name of Methusaleh, until he dies. How long did Methusaleh live? Longer than any man in the history of the world ever lived. Does that tell you a little bit about God's grace? Does it? Nine-hundred and sixty-nine years. So, before you impugn the justice of God, look again. He was so merciful. It should impress us to know that His grace is that way. What an exhibition of mercy. He waited almost 1,000 years

for men to change. They only went further and further and further away. You see, and God knows when a man crosses the line, doesn't He? God knows that.

You say - But they never had a chance to know the truth. Oh yes they did. Romans 1:19 says and verse 20 also: That there's enough knowledge of God in a man, there's enough knowledge of God from the visible creation so that every man is without ... what? ... excuse. They had the revelation of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15, the promised seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. The institution of the expiatory sacrifice as the way to approach God was already given from Abel on, they knew how to come to God. The mark of Cain placed on Cain, was a constant reminder of what God thought about sin. Adam lived 930 years himself and spent, perhaps, most of that telling men the truth about what sin brought to him. The preaching of Enoch was warning. The preaching of Noah was warning. Genesis chapter 6 verse 3 tells us that the Spirit was striving with men. Don't tell me they didn't know, they knew. They just became hard and rejected it.

And so it was this wicked black world, against which the life of Noah stands as a shining white condemnation. You don't know how black the black is until you put white against it. And the man of faith stands up and he rebukes his world by his faith alone.

Alcibiades, who was a brilliant but rather wild young man of Athens, use to say this to Socrates - "Socrates, I hate you because every time I meet you - you show me what I am."

There's a danger in goodness, you know that? For in the light of it, evil stands condemned. And just living the life of faith in deeds like Noah, working the work of faith is a living rebuke to a corrupt world. Noah threw into bold relief by his faith the unbelief of the human race. And they laughed at him. And they still do.

You know something shocking? Matthew 24:37 this..says this; "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also be the coming of the Son of man." You know, it's not going to be different.

What were the characteristics of Noah's day?

Well, they laughed at the preaching of the gospel. It's coming.

In Noah's days -there was a multiplication of men.

Genesis 6:1, "It came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth." Some say that that's duplicated today in the population explosion and so thus we're near the coming of the Son of man.

In Noah's day God was dealing patiently with the sinful world. And so is God dealing patiently in grace now. And He does today. In Noah's day God's Spirit was striving with men. And yet it said God's Spirit shall not always strive with man, with the striving was a threat of the Spirit's removal.

So there is today as the Spirit is here but the promise of

II Thessalonians 2 is - that the Spirit of God, the restrainer, shall be taken away.

In Noah's day God's message was rejected.

It is today.

But in Noah's day there was a remnant of found grace.

There is today.

And somebody said in Noah's day Enoch was miraculously translated.

A picture of the rapture of the saints before the judgment.

In Noah's day there was demon activity on the earth.

There is today.

It's no different. God's going to come in judgment, not by water but by ... what? ... fire.

So we see the man of faith. And we know he had real faith because - one, he responded to God's word; and two, he rebuked the world. And his faith stood out as a shining light against the black world.

Thirdly, and last, his faith was real because he received God's righteousness. Oh, I love the end of that...that verse in Hebrews. Let me just read it. to you, it says this: "He became the heir of the righteousness which is by faith." There is only one way to get the righteousness of God. How's that? What is it? By faith. Can you do it on your own? Can you drum up your own righteousness? Sure you can, you know what it is? Filthy rags. There's only way a man can ever ... only one way a man can



ever enter into God's presence and that's when he has God's righteousness. The only way you can have the very righteousness of God is by faith. Now if you want to work for your own, you'll get it but it's worthless.

Noah is the first man in the Bible to be called righteous. Genesis 9:6, he's called a just man. In the Greek it's the same word, dikaios, righteous. And the only way you can ever become righteous is by faith. So if Noah, if it says of Noah he became the heir of righteousness, there's only one way to get righteousness by faith, then he must have been a man of faith. Right? So the third way we know he was a man of faith was he was declared righteous.

You say - Are you righteous? Yes I am. I am righteous. I say this not facetiously, or not with pride, I am as righteous as Jesus Christ Himself. You say - Oh, MacArthur, that ends it all.

That is true. ]'hat is true. No matter what my wife says, that is true.

You say - Is that a practical thing in your life? That you are as holy as He is?

No, it is not. It is simply that the righteousness of Christ

has been imputed to me by faith. Tremendous principle, oh, tremen-dous ...

The Jews ran around trying to establish their own righteousness. And Paul says to them in Romans chapter 3, verse 20, listen to what he said - "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." You can't get there doing it that way. Verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God..." What about it? Verse 22; "It is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe." You see?

Now if you look through rose colored glasses - everything has a rosy hue. If you look through blue glasses - everything looks blue. Do you know how God looks at you? He looks you..at you through the holiness of Jesus Christ and you come out holy. God was looking at Noah through the glasses that revealed the holiness of Jesus Christ. HE) sees every believer same way, in Christ.

So you see, Noah illustrates the life and the walk and the work of faith in every way. He is a model of a man of faith. You know something, God needs more men and more women like Noah. God, help me to be like him, to really believe God, to really obey God no matter how bizarre or how strange or ... or how difficult or how out of my routine the command might be, God,help me to obey. I want my faith to obey God's word no matter how difficult I want my faith to stand as a rebuke to a corrupt world. I want my faith to be that which establishes me in the sight of God as righteous.

Beloved, judgment is coming. I stand here today as a ... as an out-of-context Noah saying - Jesus is coming. And I'm not sure we have anywhere near 120 years. And He's coming in great judgment.

The Apostle Peter said - "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and all the works that are in it shall be burned up." Every-body in this world burned in the flame and judgement. Judgment is coming.

Now you can believe it or not believe it. You can count your life the way it is and keep going that way or you can change. It's up to you. But just remember this, if God spared not the angels that sinned, if God spared not the old world but flooded it, if God spared not Sodom and Gomorrah but destroyed them in an inferno, who are you to think God shall spare this evil world?

I always remember what Billy Graham's wife said - "If God doesn't destroy our world, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

Judgment is coming. And the only security is refuge in the ark who is Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that we've learned a little about faith from Noah. That we only come to You on the basis of faith. We have nothing of ourselves to offer You. And in ourselves we are valueless apart from Christ. God, make us people of faith. O God, may we really believe You and live like it. Even those of us who are Christians, seeing that we know these things, what manner of persons ought we to be? Oh, in all holiness and blamelessness, looking to and hasting unto the great day when our Lord comes. Being found in Him without spot, without blemish, living in peace. God, help us to so order our lives like Noah did. Help us to spend ourselves doing the things that will get us ready and the rest of the world ready for the day that judgment comes.

Even we think of Paul who said - "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." O Lord, help us to live in the real knowledge that judgment comes.

Father, we pray also for those that are here who may not know Jesus Christ tonight. That they might turn their life over to Him. That they might put simple trusting faith in Him. That they might enter into the ark of safety. They might live by faith. Oh how good it is to believe You. You've proven Yourself worthy of faith. May no one go from this place who hasn't put their faith in You. Our Father, we pray that even as we sing You'll speak to hearts and that You'll move people out and forward that they might really acknowledge You, even some Christians who need to come and pray. Father, there are other people who...who are believing You but they're not working for You and maybe You're directing them here to Grace Church, bring them, Father, that they might join with us and serve with us here as members of this particular area of Your service. Father, speak to all of our hearts and bring to the prayer room those whom you know and need to be there for prayer and counseling. Through Your perfect work we thank You for them in Jesus' name. Amen.

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