

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Message #26

Hebrews 11:7

Faith that pleases God is a faith that believes the Word of God even when as yet we have not seen everything (Hebrews 11:1). One of the greatest examples of this kind of faith is Noah. Talk about a man who took God at His Word; Noah is the ultimate example.

If we were to poll most people on this earth and ask them who built the ark, almost everyone in the world would say, “Noah.” Noah is one character of the Bible who is universally known as the guy who built the ark. But the thing that really makes Noah such a hero is his faith. The fact is if it weren’t for Noah’s faith, all humanity would have been destroyed. Noah’s faith saved the world. The faith that Noah had was a faith that believed the Word of God. Everything he did, he did by faith believing the Word of God.

We need to set the context for this faith testimony from the book of Genesis, specifically **Genesis 6**.

At the time Noah lived, the world had become demonically evil. There was a major outbreak of satanic and sexual activity. Demons possessed humans and cohabited with women. They produced “Nephilim” (Genesis 6:2, 4), which means these were the highest ranked, most famous and powerful persons on the earth. God saw the wickedness of their depraved minds and hearts (6:5), and was very sorry He had even made man (6:6).

In the midst of this depraved world that had affected both the sons of Seth and the sons of Cain, one man believed the grace of God could save sinners. One man, Noah, “found grace”, “found favor” in the eyes of the Lord (6:8). **Noah was one man who believed that if sinful man were to have a relationship with a Holy God, it would have to be by grace.** He apparently was one man on earth who believed that God’s grace could save depraved sinners; and by believing that, he experienced God’s grace, which ultimately led to Noah becoming a righteous man who walked with God (6:9). Noah began to walk with God as a result of experiencing God’s grace.

It is interesting that according to I Timothy 4:1, Paul warns that in the last days of the Church before the time of wrath on this earth, there will again be another demonic invasion. Paul says, in later times “some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceived spirits and doctrines of demons.” One way this will happen is through a manmade legalism. What this means then is that we need the same kind of faith that Noah had. The similarities between when Noah lived and when we live are parallel. So the faith that God honored in Noah is the same kind of faith He will honor in us.

FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD IS A FAITH THAT BELIEVES IN GOD’S GRACE TO SAVE SINNERS, AND SO BELIEVES GOD’S WORD AND GOD’S WARNINGS THAT IT WORKS FOR GOD AND WITNESSES FOR GOD JUST LIKE NOAH.

Now the major thing that Noah did, that puts him here in the faith chapter of Hebrews 11, was he prepared or built an incredible ark by believing the Word of God. Simple faith in the Word of God accomplishes mighty things.

Now the description of the ark that he built is given to us in Genesis 6:14-17 and is impressive:

- 1) The Hebrew word ark is one that means a chest or coffer - big treasure chest or coffin structure.
- 2) The dimensions of the ark are 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet tall. This ark is not built for sailing purposes but floating purposes (6:15). To get some perspective of this, it is about 1½ football fields long and about the same size as a football field wide.
- 3) There was a window on top of the ark, a door on the side of the ark, and three stories or decks in the ark (6:16).

Now here is what Noah actually did: **By faith Noah prepared an ark.** The verb “prepared” (κατασκευαζω) means to prepare in the sense of making something ready (Smith, p. 238). Noah very carefully prepared this ark getting it ready to float in accordance with what God revealed.

There are five faith facts we may observe about this:

Faith Fact #1 - Noah prepared the ark for the purpose of salvation of his household. **11:7**

Now God had originally told Noah that this ark would save him and his family in view of His pending wrath (Gen. 6:18-19). So the salvation of him and his entire family was contingent upon each one of them being in the safety of the ark. Truth is, in this ark were eight people and, frankly, these eight people saved the world of humanity.

In the book of Hebrews this is a major point. The salvation of any person is contingent upon each person believing on Jesus Christ and being washed in His blood. One must be “in Christ” to be saved.

Faith Fact #2 - Noah was warned by God about things he had not yet seen. **11:7a**

The participle “warned” (κηρυττιζω) is one that means God deliberated or discussed what He intended to do with Noah (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 463). The emphasis of this word is that this was a thorough discussion that answered all of Noah’s questions. The passive voice of the verb indicates God was the One doing the talking and Noah was the one doing the listening. The aorist tense indicates this was a one moment of time thorough discussion that God had with Noah.

There was plenty Noah had never seen when God revealed this to him. He had never seen a flood. He had never seen God pour out His wrath. Some question whether or not he had ever seen rain. He certainly had never seen a boat like the one he was to build. But God’s Word warned of these things and Noah believed it. Miles away from any major body of water, he began to gather the wood and build the ark. There were many things he had never seen, but he believed the Word of God.

At this point in time there was one man on earth who really understood God’s Word, especially in regard to future judgment. I do not think it is ever the majority who understand the Word of God.

Faith Fact #3 - Noah prepared an ark in reverence . **11:7b**

The word “reverence” (εὐλαβεομαι) means that Noah was very cautious and very circumspect and reverent as he went about this assignment (Smith, p. 187). Kent Hughes called this a “holy reverence” (*Hebrews*, Vol. 2, p. 88). Peter O’Brien said Noah did not respond to the warning out of fear, but out of “reverent awe” (*The Letter to the Hebrews*, p. 407).

Many take the position that the ark that Noah prepared was simply for the purpose of a physical salvation of himself and his family and not a spiritual salvation. However, the fact that he prepares this in reverence would seem to suggest otherwise.

I understand this to mean that as Noah built the ark, he recognized there was something very sacred about it. Not only would this ark provide security for Noah and his family and the animal world (Gen. 6:18-19), but this ark would be an amazing illustration of N.T. grace salvation and also an amazing illustration of Tribulation salvation.

This ark is a very illustrative ship because it provides an illustration of N.T. salvation of faith in Jesus Christ which illustrates our Spirit baptism (I Peter 3:18-21), in which we are so identified with Jesus Christ that we cannot ever face the wrath of God.

But if we put this illustration in the context after the rapture of Enoch, this illustrates the small number of people who will survive the Great Tribulation. From a mathematical perspective the numbers will be few who will survive the Tribulation. In fact, we know that only one third of the Jews will come through it.

Faith Fact #4 - Noah’s work condemned the world. **11:7c**

The word “condemn” means that Noah’s testimony and example was a condemnatory judgment against the whole world. He had the testimony of one who believed the Word of God.

Noah was a public figure. He had a family and he proclaimed truth. The building of the ark by Noah made a very real concrete statement about the pending judgment of God. He was a truth setting force for righteousness in a very evil and sinful world. As Noah went about the business of building an ark, the very act prophetically predicted a terrible pending judgment upon humanity.

Kent Hughes asked how many Noah jokes do you think Noah had to listen to in 120 years of work (pre. cit. p. 88). Just imagine all the insults and the laughing that came at his expense. He finishes the boat and starts loading animals into this ship which is miles from any major body of water. He must have been a laughing stock of all who knew him.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said the scientists of Noah’s day would have united to call him totally “foolish” (*Hebrews 11:7*, p. 6). The scientific scholars of Noah’s day probably thought Noah was out of his mind.

There was no scientific proof of a flood or of any water in the area that could make a ship float. There had never been rain that could lift this massive “inland barge.” It went against the grain of all scientific reason and evidence. You could not test this flood idea in a laboratory because there was nothing in the past or present to which you could compare it. Now those same mocking scientists can look all around the world and see evidences of a flood, but they could not in Noah’s day.

I used to jog with two professors from Idaho State University, both of whom were not Christians but were considered to be brilliant in their field. I used to witness to them and they would inevitably try to attack me through things from the book of Genesis and one of them was the idea of a worldwide flood. Just 50 miles from where we were was a cave in the Arco desert and if you go into that cave, you can see evidence that at some point of time there was an amazing amount of water in the desert. Evidence of a flood is worldwide and scientists today who have seen floods still deny it. Think what it would be like in Noah’s day.

We know from II Peter 2:5 that Noah kept on warning and kept on preaching all 120 years. Noah interpreted God’s Word literally and he believed it literally and he communicated it to others, and people made fun of him and his message. He kept building and warning. What he proclaimed with his lips he backed up with his life. People must have laughed and laughed as he cut down trees and sawed boards and built a boat. **They had a good laugh for 120 years, but it was Noah who had the last laugh.**

Jesus specifically predicted that when He returns things will once again be like they were in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37). **One thing this certainly implies is that hardly any will take God’s Word seriously and interpret it literally. People will laugh at Biblical warnings just like they did in the days of Noah.**

Now I want you to consider Noah’s message to the world at this point. You cannot escape God’s wrath by your works; but in order to escape God’s wrath, you must be in the one and only ark which has been designed by God and built by Noah. Practically all people in Noah’s day and certainly almost all people in our day believe that you can escape God’s wrath by being good. Noah preached to the entire world that the only way one may escape God’s wrath is by being safely in one specific ark. That message needs to be preached today. For one to be saved, he must be in Jesus Christ by faith.

Faith Fact #5 - Noah’s faith made him an heir of righteousness. **11:7d**

There is no question that the word “heir” stresses grace. When you receive something because you are an heir, you receive it in pure grace. For the most part it is freely given. Notice the key emphasis of this text; Noah became an heir of righteousness “by faith.” Noah was the recipient of the grace of God by faith.

The message we must proclaim today is that if one is to be an heir of righteousness, one must believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. He is the ark. If one does not believe in Jesus Christ, one will burn forever in a fiery hell. You may ask, have we ever seen hell? You may ask, have we ever seen heaven? To both questions we say no and yes. We have not seen it physically, but by faith we have seen it through the same eyes that Noah saw the pending flood, the eyes of the Word of God.

If you take your stand by faith for that message, you'll probably be a laughing stock to some just like Noah. If you warn that there is only one way to escape God's wrath and that is through faith in Jesus Christ, you will probably not be popular.

Five practical lessons:

1. Noah believed God's Word literally and he communicated that to others.
2. Noah was not fazed by the mockery of others - he kept building and preaching.
3. Noah's faithfulness judged and condemned others.
4. Noah's righteousness was due to faith.
5. To escape the wrath of God you must be safe in the ark which is Jesus Christ.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson once told the story of a doctor who was skeptical about saving faith in Jesus Christ. He had a Christian patient and he said to him, "I cannot understand saving faith. I believe in God and believe there was this person Jesus Christ. I do believe He was the Son of God and I do believe the Bible, yet I am not saved. So what is the matter with me? His patient said, "A couple of days ago I placed my personal faith in you. I was sick and I believed that you had the knowledge to heal me. So I came to you and you prescribed a mysterious medicine I know very little about and because I believe you, I take it. I totally and completely trust you to be able to make me well." That is what saving faith is. It totally trusts in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins even when you do not understand all of the mysteries. You go to God and you tell Him that you are totally relying on Him to save you and you will be saved.