

Hebrews 11:6-7

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

We have spent a lot of time on verse 6 over the last 5 weeks, so we will move on to **11:7** and discuss this man Noah whose story can be found in **Genesis 6-9**. However, before we jump into the details of his story, I want you to notice that in this passage we once again see the critical aspect of true Biblical faith which distinguishes it from belief. ***Faith is always active and never passive and is always proved out in our lives in the choices we make.*** We may say we “believe” the truth about God (or have “faith” in God), but if our belief is not activated by our choices into actions of faith, then that belief is essentially worthless.

That is why James says that he will prove his faith by his works and in reference to Abraham said, “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected” (**James 2:22**) and again, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (**James 2:26**).

Our entire study in this Chapter **11** will make this point. Remember, this letter is being written to believing Jews who were considering returning to Judaism to escape their present persecution at the hands of the Jews. With these examples of men and women who lived by faith, the Spirit is in essence screaming at them,

“Don’t make the choice to shrink back. Your faith will be perfected by the choice you make to endure your time of testing trusting that God will soon deliver you.”

Again, *faith is always active and never passive*. You must begin to ask yourself what this means for your life. How does this apply to you? You must not read the Bible or listen to these teachings and say “cool story Hansel,” and then just move on as if you have to get back to your real life. No; you have to start asking the Lord to reveal to you all the places in your heart where your “belief,” which some of us clearly uses interchangeably with the word “faith,” has not been activated by your choices into “perfected” or “completed” faith. Apart from works, faith is dead; it is just mere “belief;” and, as a result, is for the most part impotent.

Another way to express this is to utilize the phrase which Paul coined in **Galatians 5:6**, “what is important is faith expressing itself in God’s agape love.” True faith is proven out by our actions towards others. Words are nice, but unless others are drenched with God’s agape love (in all of its marvelous and divergent faces) through our lives, then we don’t really have Biblical or perfected faith.

I wish I could hardwire this truth into everyone’s head. Over and over I get into these discussions where people say they have faith because they claim to believe the truth; yet, the fruit of their lives is clearly wanting. Sometimes it can be really frustrating because with some people it takes a long time to pierce through this wrong belief about faith. This story of Noah, however, makes it clear.

Noah heard God’s voice about the ensuing judgment and did exactly as he was instructed. He built a very big boat (that looked more like a box than a boat) in order to save those God had elected; and by this act he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

You see building the boat was the evidence of Noah's faith. Take note; he did not build the boat to prove His faith, but building the boat was the proof that he loved God more than he loved his own reputation, comfort, goals, agenda, and his own idea of what his life and future were to be about. All of it, everything, was submitted to His God; as such, He became one of the few to whom the righteousness of God would be attributed—and one day we get to meet this guy.

Let's stare at this idea that by building the boat he condemned the world. I think this idea of condemnation goes back to the phrase in **11:6** that says without faith it is impossible to please God. Noah's actions 1) proved that he believed his God was the big "G" God and not some little "g" god, 2) proved that he trusted himself to God despite the practical consequences in his life, and 3) proved that he had a relationship with God, **which by definition proved that everyone else did not.**

I am sure there were plenty of religious people during his day, as there have always been, but belief in God and faith in God, as we discussed, are two radically different things. **Noah's life, as it was lived, condemned all others; or, said another way, it proved that they did not know God.** How powerful is that. What about your life? How big is your God? Does your life prove to others the difference between belief and faith or in the Christian circles between what we generically call "faith" and what the Bible calls perfected, faith? Does your life set you apart or do you just blend in with the religious crowd?

Noah made the decision to cross over and belong only to God. He made the decision to identify himself by what our own Sarah Leichnetz coined as "active, active faith" and not by anything this world has to offer whether practical,

spiritual, philosophical, financial, or relational. Noah was a man who was willing to walk out his faith regardless of the consequences trusting that his God is God.

Last week we discussed a little bit about what the culture was like back in those days. But let's take another look at Genesis 6.

Genesis 6:5

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:11-12

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

Notice that the Lord focuses first on the intention of the thoughts of the heart and not the behavior. In our modern world of Christianity we have made such a big deal about controlling sinful behavior; yet, the real issue is the intentions of the thoughts of our heart, for that is where sinful behavior is birthed.

God focuses on the source of the problem; behavior is merely the fruit of the problem. When the fruit is rotten we know that the tree is rotten. It's just the tell tale sign that there is a bigger problem. And the tree does not get better by attacking, controlling, or treating the fruit; in fact, it does nothing for the future

health and welfare of the tree. This is why God focuses on the intentions of the thoughts of the heart for that is where either sin or faith is birthed.

This is why it does not matter how hard you try and control sinful behavior; it eventually just mutates into some other expression of sinful behavior. What needs to change in our lives goes way down to the level of the intentions of the thoughts of our heart. If we don't know why we can trust ourselves to God and how to trust ourselves to God in those deep recesses of our soul, the intentions of the thoughts of our heart will always be fixated on evil—"evil" being defined by that which is not from God.

Isn't it weird how blind we have become in our Christian culture? If this one basic truth were understood, in addition to the fact that there would be a lot fewer books published (the economics of which however might explain why we have become blind to this truth), people would not have to drive themselves, and others, crazy by striving so hard against sin. They would realize that if they chose to believe the truth about God and the truth about who they are in God, sin would not be an issue and they actually would experience sustained victory over the very sins to which they have so long been enslaved.

This is what the Spirit means when He says in ***Galatians 5:16***, "but I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." You simply won't because if you are controlled by the Spirit He will lead you in your desires which are opposite to those of your flesh (***Galatians 5:17***). And according to ***Romans 8***, the mind set on the Spirit is not hostile to God and is fixed on life and peace and not on sin. This is why the true issue in terms of our walk with God has never

been on behavior but has always been the intentions of the thoughts of our heart—or the things we really believe about God and about ourselves.

In Noah's days, the people had so completely rejected God that faith was not existent. Literally everyone was intent on evil all the time; which is just another way of saying that they did not know God, think about God, did not move in God, and no part of their life exhibited any aspect of a relationship with God. Remember, as we studied many, many times, there is no middle ground of goodness. Whatever is not of faith is sin, for only God is good and all else, all that does not come from God, is evil. As a result, the earth was filled with violence and corruption and all flesh had corrupted their way.

We cannot even imagine life in this type of overwhelming culture of evil. We have pockets of this kind of darkness in our world today, but only pockets. We are so privileged to be able to live in a world where people still have sensitivity to God and there are so many who know Him and love Him. There is light in this world. The darkness that must have surrounded Noah's day-in-and-day-out life must have been ridiculous and it must have been so oppressive.

What is even more astonishing is that Noah was the only one in whom God found favor. By this time his Dad, Lamech, had already been dead for a number of years and all Noah had to hold to was the legacy of faith that had been passed down to him by his great-grandfather Enoch and his own experiences with God (which according to the book of Enoch were pretty intense and very similar to the experiences of his great-grandfather). Look what God says about Noah.

Genesis 6:9

... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

God says the same thing about Noah which He said about Enoch. Noah walked with God. The Bible does not say anything about Methuselah's relationship with God or about Lamech's, but Noah gets this outstanding accreditation. He did not walk after His God; he did not walk before His God; he walked arm and arm with his God. He knew Him.

Now just to help you out in terms of understanding how God uses language, when he says that Noah was righteous and blameless, He is not saying that Noah did not sin. We will find that God says similar things about Abraham, yet we have written proof in the Bible of Abraham's blatant and ridiculous sin. So this statement is not a commentary regarding sin as much as it is a commentary regarding Noah's faith and more importantly God's character.

What we find in the Old Testament is that because of faith, God attributes and imparts His righteousness and His perfection to failed human beings and they become (like it said about Noah in Hebrews **11:7**) heirs of righteousness. In other words, righteousness is their inheritance.

The same thing has happened to us; but for us it happened real time, it was not something we had to wait to inherit. When we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God gave us His **new nature**, which in His likeness is righteous, holy and true (**Ephesians 4:24**). Therefore, He is able to legitimately call us saints and call us holy because He is holy. And again, this does not mean we are without sin;

what it means is that God is faithful and He made a way through the blood of Jesus to impart His holiness directly to those who choose to believe by faith.

And in the Old Testament, although they did not have the *new nature*, they had a future whereby, like us, they would one day be fully justified by the blood of Jesus. And it is clear in the New Testament that the Father acknowledged their faith and thereby sealed them in their faith and preserved them until the time that they would get to meet Jesus their Savior and Redeemer—the true object of their faith. And we know that after Jesus was crucified He descended into the earth to lead forth into heaven all those who because of their faith had been preserved by God.

In addition, since God sees the beginning from the end, God chooses to look from eternity future (after the cross) into eternity past and therefore saw Noah and the saints of old as already fully cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, even at the time that Genesis was being written by Moses, God could refer to Noah as righteous and blameless for that is His perspective as all people and all things to Him are filtered through the Cross—from eternity future looking to eternity past. It's like a lens. This is why Noah was given this great commendation.

When you stop and understand these things, you can get a feel for why the Bible says that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever and how the New Testament is all over the Old Testament. God has always dealt with man on the basis of man's faith and God's character of love, mercy, righteousness, and faithfulness.

Now let's just think of this story; it has always fascinated me. Who knows what Noah's profession was, but presumably he was busy doing the things people did

in those days to scrape out a living. The suddenly God communicated to Noah. Just so you know, when the Bible uses the phrase “God said to Noah” it does not mean that He talked to Noah in the same way that He talked to Moses, which was face to face. More than likely it means that He had an angel deliver the message to Noah; but still it was God communicating to him and that is what the Bible captures in its phraseology.

But here this man is working and toiling away and suddenly God tells him that He is going to destroy every living creature and wipe man from the face of the earth! I am sure when Noah woke up that morning the last thing he expected to hear from God was something as dramatic and cataclysmic as that. Can you imagine? There was no prior prophesy which alluded to this event, there was no prior warning, just a sudden declaration of what will soon be. Noah must have flipped out just thinking about everyone being dead.

God told Noah that he was going to cover the earth with a flood and that everything on earth would die; but He also promised that Noah would be kept safe in the ark—he just needed to build it. Then after a lot of description in **Genesis 6** about what he is to do with the animals and stuff, the Bible tells us something that I believe is more than astonishing given the circumstances:

Genesis 6:22

So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

Wow! Talk about a faith that condemned not just the world of old but even speaks over you and me and how we live. Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him—everything! And believe me it was not easy; after all, he was not indwelt with the Spirit of God as you and I are.

I am sure that through the years Noah had to continually come to grips with whether or not he actually heard from God or had just eaten bad dates or drank some sour goat's milk. You have to think that he sometimes drove himself crazy wondering about that; after all, a lot of time passed between the message and its consummation—we're talking over 100 years. God makes us a promise and a few years go by and we are ready to dump the whole thing as if He never said a thing. We are so impatient but consider this man Noah. Wow, 100+ years and he continued to do all that God asked of him.

Think of what his wife must have thought. [Noah] Uh, honey, can we have a little talk. I got a job promotion today; just though you would want to know. [Wife] Oh really dear, what kind of a promotion; and by whom? I haven't assigned you something new to do around the house, what are you talking about. [Noah] Well, um, hum, cough, cough, I don't know how to put this but ... God told me to build a very big boat and he is going to kill everyone but us.

[Wife] What! What are you talking about? Here sit down, put some water on your head, drink something, you sound like a crazy man who has sat in the sun too long. [Noah] No really He did. I was taking a break and all of a sudden He told me that because everyone was so given over to sin, He had decided to destroy all living creatures and wipe them all from the face of the earth! So I have to build

this boat; and you and me and our sons and their wives will be saved. This is a good thing.

[Noah] Oh and, by the way, remember how you always said you wanted a dog. Well, we have to collect 2 of every animal on the face of the earth, so it's going to be a lot of fun. Well have our own zoo. Don't look at me that way, I am being serious. When I said that this boat is going to be big, I meant big!!! I just have to go and build it.

[Wife] Noah (whatever your last name is), I know that your great-granddad Enoch was somewhat of a loon with all those visions and stuff; I mean everyone has talked about him and how he just up and disappeared and abandoned the family. But when I married you I never thought I would have to deal with you going psycho on me.

[Wife] Ok, let's speak practically here, who is going to provide the food while you go and build this boat? Am I supposed to go get a job and bring home the bacon? How long is it going to take? What about our boys; they are working to provide for their wives, do you expect them to just stop everything and build your dang boat? What about our friends, are they going to die? What about our reputation in this community? Don't you think they are going to have a hay-day with this one? Remember, they are not nice people.

I mean really, try and get into this man's shoes and think of the mental and personal struggle that Noah had to face. Think about what his mother-in-law would have said. I am sure she would have come unglued on him. Then think of the fear, anger, anxiety, and so on, as he thought about what he was asked to do and what God was going to do to everyone else. It is mind numbing.

Imagine, here you are, this one little man on this huge world, and God has said that you are going to provide the means of salvation for mankind as well as for all the earth dwelling animals. The magnitude of this would have seemed ridiculous to me. First of all I would be wondering, why me? Second, I would be wondering why God was not going to save anyone else. Third, I would be wondering why He would not just give me the boat; why do I have to spend my whole life building this thing; He's God after all. I know you would be thinking the same way.

Now, I am going to refer for a moment back to the book of Enoch which we talked about last week. By the way, I found out that part of it was actually written by Noah; so it should help us understand why he was able to endure all of this tremendous pressure. In doing so, however, I am not assuming that the Book of Enoch is right on these matters, I just think it gives us some interesting insight that we don't get in Genesis.

The book of Enoch tells us that an angel named Uriel delivered the message to Noah and explained to him all that he must do. The Angel explained that God, through this judgment, was going to heal the earth from its plague of corruption and cleanse the earth from all oppression, unrighteousness, sin, godlessness, and uncleanness (10:20).

In addition, it explains that the fallen angels who did not keep their proper abode but came and had sex with women also taught mankind all manner of sorcery, witchcraft, and how to combine metals to make molten images and weapons of war. It was through angels that man learned what is called the "violence of the satans (the deceivers or accusers)" which corrupted the earth and that is why God was going to bring the judgment.

So after this initial conversation with the angel, Noah had other visions which were very similar to the ones Enoch had where God revealed to him all sorts of details about the unseen world as well as the proverbs and wisdom that were previously given to Enoch.

So again, we see that this man, Noah, who like his great-grandfather walked with God and was afforded a great privilege of knowing the things of God. I am sure that these revelations kept him sane during the 100+ years that it took him to build the ark. Yes 100+ years; that's a long time to be cutting wood.

The Book of Enoch also says that angels helped in this process which to me seems entirely reasonable. This thing was huge. In fact, it was not until the 18th century that modern man built anything as large and sea worthy as the ark. How the angels helped, I have no idea. It's kind of like asking how they help us. We really don't know; we just know that the Bible says that they do and that God sends them to minister to us (**Hebrews 1:14**).

So maybe they empowered him, encouraged him, protected him, or gave him insight as to the engineering, the detailed specifications, and the manufacturing process. We are not sure, but based on the size of the ark, it's clear he needed the help.

The Bible says that the ark was 300 cubits long; 50 cubits wide, 30 cubits high. The standard conversion from a cubit to inches is 17.5" per cubit; but the Egyptian cubit was 20.5." And since Moses was educated in Egypt, and he wrote Genesis, perhaps he had the larger number in mind. But either way, the ark would have been between 437-512' long, 75-128' wide, and 45-77' high, which would have

been about $\frac{1}{2}$ as long as the titanic and 2x as wide if the smaller measurements were used.

As far as its volume and ability carry cargo, it would be equivalent to the hold of 200-300 Boeing 747-400 (one of the largest cargo aircraft) or 425-670 standard cargo trailers, or 569-667 standard railroad box cars. You get the idea, this thing was massive.

It was probably built less like a boat in terms of a rounded stern, but more like a rectangular box, which is why it is called an ark which literally means "box." It was not designed to navigate the waters smoothly but to just float around and not capsize. Noah was not worried about where he was going or trying to steer the thing; he just wanted the boat to stay afloat.

Based on the length, width, to height ratio of 30x5x3, it's been said by ship builders that this boat would have to have been tilted by over 90 degrees in order to capsize. So the design given to Noah by God made it virtually impossible to sink the ark.

Let's consider the man. Imagine that God asked you to do something and it would take 100 long years. I cannot imagine that. It had to take Noah many, many years just to gather the wood and other materials, much less to start building the ark. I mean there was no Home Depots available and even then, the amount of material needed I am sure exceeded anything that was locally available. Then even once it was all gathered, I bet the progress was so slow in the early days that it was probably pretty hard to stay motivated.

Think about it; we hate being in the same job doing the same thing over and over again. We even get all impatient and frustrated with God in how long it takes

Him to work through some of this stuff in our lives. We wished He would work faster and heal us now; in fact, we seem to want everything to happen now (and most of us generally loath the process).

There are times where we are all angry and upset because we feel that God has just left us in this place and it seems like forever; were ridiculous. I know that I tweaked out a time or two when for the first 2 years of this church God had only sent us slightly more than a handful of people. I constantly heard people say that there must be something strange or wrong about our church because it does not grow and a “healthy church” would grow—don’t you all know.

The funny thing is that people are still saying that today and they have no idea what God has done in this church. For a while there I almost started to believe those lies and I would get worried; but God would settle me down and remind me that He is God, He is in control, and I don’t have to worry about it. I don’t have to listen to what other people say; I just need to keep doing what He told me to do. That is fine and all, but still it was hard to hear what others were saying.

But considering what Noah went through, we all are a bunch of babies. Every day for Noah must have seemed like the last, but still **he did everything that God commanded him to do.**

In thinking about this man and what he was made of, I also want you to consider that there were no signs of coming disaster to which Noah could point. There was nothing practical that would have made what God said real to him or to anyone else. It was not like he saw the water start to gather in different places and he knew he had to saw faster. It’s not like the clouds were gathering and were threatening disaster. Once again, each day looked exactly the same as the

one before it. All Noah had was a promise; all he had was the Word of God from the God that no one else seemed to know or care about. All he had was his faith!

In a lot of ways this parallels the church. We have been told to do the will of God for our lives and to persevere and endure knowing that at any time the Lord might return. People have been living this way for 2,000 years and still we wait and still we hope. You see, God wants our attitude to be one of present expectation. It could happen now, in our lives; and so, like Noah, we must be ready and continue to do all that God has asked of us no matter how dreary the task or how long it takes us to complete it.

We need to keep this in mind and let this truth form our attitudes toward our life and where God has us. I know it is hard, but we need to let the story of this man Noah frame for us the right perspective on our little lives, which for most us won't even be lived for 100+ years. But our future, our reward, our inheritance will be ours sooner than we might realize.

Now, taking into account what we discussed about the culture of evil in that day; you can only imagine the ridicule and persecution that Noah experienced at the hands of the local community. I am sure he became quite the spectacle not just to those who lived nearby but he was probably a tourist attraction for all manner of travelers.

I can just picture it; they probably charged visitors to come see the crazy man building the boat. We don't even know if Noah was near a body of water or not. For all we know he could have been building this boat way inland which means practically that it would be good for nothing more than a big strange looking barn. People would probably just stare at Noah and his family in complete disbelief and

amazement and mocked them. I'm sure Noah's wife loved that they were the object of the neighbors ridicule.

Honestly, that is how our lives should be. I think that if we really go all out and live by faith that we would become living spectacles and others would similarly stare at us in complete disbelief and amazement. At least that is what we see documented in the book of Acts.

These early believers did not fight when others would fight. They did not retaliate where others were driven by revenge. They did not give a clever retort where others would have unleashed the sharpest of tongues. They did not run where others would flee. They suffered persecution and sang songs where others would curse in bitterness. They loved when others hated. They were hopeful where others had given up all hope. They were kind and compassionate where others were self centered and cruel. They helped each other financially where others did not even take care of their own. Their idea of personal success was getting the opportunity to preach the gospel and they did not relish in vain glories.

The examples of how they lived are overwhelming. People knew that they were Christians. People knew that they were different. I have to ask, is your faith such that people know that about you? Are you a spectacle? Are you doing everything that God has told you to do? I know those types of sermon questions are kind of intimidating, but at the same time they are not to be taken lightly. They are not.

The Spirit, through Noah, is giving us a picture of how we can live and how we are supposed to live. We are aliens and strangers on this earth and our ark is Jesus Himself; He is our means of rescue. Therefore, we are to be about our

Father's business, no matter what tasks we have been assigned, for it will lead to our being a part of God's great plan of salvation for those on this earth.

Remember, the earth is once again going to be destroyed, mankind is going to be judged once and for all for its sin and lawlessness, but for now we can be spectacles of God's grace and mercy. We can be examples for others to see of how God is and is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

According to **11:7**, in reverent fear, Noah constructed the ark. He was not afraid of God; no, not at all. He just knew that his God was God and there was no other. He knew that obedience was proper and the right response for a mere fragile man to offer up to His great God. We have discussed it a lot over the last few weeks, but have you thought this week about how big your God really is? What has that truth meant for your life practically? What has been your response to this truth?

Keep in mind, Noah, Enoch and Abel all chose to live as radicals, believing that God was truly their God. They were full on, no holds barred, committed to the Lord. We have our examples, we just need to stop being so focused within and so caught up in our little personal drama and instead follow Jesus with our whole hearts.

Let's Pray.