

Heb. 11:7 The Faith of Noah: Witness

Today we come to the faith of Noah. In the last two sermons, we've seen the faith of Abel and the faith of Enoch. A.W. Pink says the order of these three men of faith is very important. He says the focus of Abel's faith is worship. The focus of Enoch's faith is walking. And the focus of Noah's faith is his witness. And this order is so important. We must begin with worship and what is acceptable to God before we move to obedience of God's commands. And then comes our witness. He says this is the "order of heaven." So many people today focus on their witness, but do not come to God in the right way, nor are they obedient in their walk. What does this say of their "faith?" Today, as men and women of faith (Christians) we worship God, we come to God, through Jesus Christ. And we follow God's revealed will in obedience. And, we are God's witnesses in this world as we follow our Lord's command to make disciples. I want to focus on the faith of Noah (transition) as a preacher of righteousness. He was a witness. I have 3 truths about what it means to be a witness, which is the same as to have faith. 1) To be a witness, there must be revelation from God; 2) To be a witness, there must be an internal and an external obedience; and 3) To be a witness brings both salvation and condemnation.

1. To be a witness, there must be revelation from God. In the context of Noah there is revelation. God told him exactly what He was going to do with a warning and then He gives specific instructions. Look first at v. 7: "**By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen . . .**" We are told in Gen. 6 that Noah was a righteous and blameless man. And like Enoch, he also "walked with God." And God came to him with a warning. And by faith, Noah builds the ark and is a witness to the world. We get this story from Gen. 6 and the warning in vv. 11-14: "**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. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark . . .**" And then in vv. 17-22 God gives specific instructions about the ark and what to take on the ark. In v. 22 we read Noah's response: "**Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.**"

God reveals Himself and his commands to us. And one of the purposes of these commands is that we be his witnesses in this world. To see this, we must go way back to our first parents. In Gen. 1:28, God says to them: "**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**" I know it is a bit different as there was no sin at that time, but the principle is there. God reveals himself and gives instructions to his people. We must listen and obey. And when we do, we live by faith as God's witnesses to the world. Do you remember Jesus' encounter with Satan during his time of testing? In Matt. 4:3-4 we read: "**And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'**" To have faith is to be a witness. To be a witness is to have faith. And faith comes by hearing. Hearing what? The "Word of God" (This is our principle.) Faith is not baseless. It is based on the VERY CLEAR Word of God revealed to us.

Like Noah, we also are given a warning of coming judgment in; the words of Paul to the Thessalonians. In Thess. 1:7-10 we read: **“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints . . .”** And then Peter says in 2 Pet. 3:10-13: **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”**

What will we do with this revelation from God. If we are people of faith, we will also do as Noah did. We will live righteously and we will be a witness as we also tell others.. V. 14 says, **“Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”**

Let me ask, “What our marching orders from the Lord Jesus concerning our witness?” In Matt. 28:18-20: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

2. To be a witness there must be an internal and external obedience. Look at v. 7 again. **“By faith, Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen . . .”** (This is the revelation, the warning of God) And then we see Noah’s reaction: **“in reverent fear constructed an ark . . .”** Here we see the heart and the action. They always go together. When Noah hears the command of God, he obeys outwardly by building the ark. But his motivation is fear, specifically “reverent fear.” The meaning here is not the same as being scared of something, like all of us are afraid of sharks, some to the point of not even getting in the ocean. The meaning is not like the fear one might have from a bully as school. Just this week, I saw an Andy Griffith where Opie gives the bully a nickel every day because he is scared of a “knuckle sandwich.” There are all types of unhealthy fear, even a wife who submits to her husband because she is scared of what he will do. This is not the fear of faith.

The fear we see with Noah is a reverential fear. I think of Phil. 2:12. Paul says, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling . . .”** The fear that faith produces DOES fear God’s warnings. But, it is not an anxious fear. Noah did not fear the flood in and of itself; he feared the ONE who would bring the flood. In Luke 12:4-5 Jesus says, **“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”** As men and women of faith, following the example of Noah, when we hear the warnings of God (such as the ones from the Book of Hebrews), we consider his greatness, his holiness, and his power. Yet, the ONE we fear is also

the ONLY one who can save us. And this He has promised to do for those with faith. This is an internal obedience. And then, by faith, we obey and do what He has commanded us. With Noah, first comes FEAR. Then . . . he builds the ark.

This is why Ps. 111:10 says that: **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”** The only outcome pleasing to God is a fearful obedience. This means that faith first influences our affections and then our actions follow. There are so many warnings of judgment from God in the OT and Christ in the NT. And as people of faith we obey with heart of fear. But, this principles also works for other commands. Let’s say, as a husband, I read Eph. 5:25 which says, **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”** How do I obey this command. First, my motive is this: God says it and there are great consequences for my marriage if I do not. I fear him. And then, by his grace, I obey his command. The same can be said about wives. Eph. 5:22 says, **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”** How do you obey this command but in the same way. As Christian children, how do you obey Eph. 6:1 which says, **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”** You obey first because God has said it. And in humility and fear of God, you do the same. This is what faith does. And when we do, we are a righteous witness to God and to the world. Let’s move on.

3. To be a witness brings both salvation and condemnation. We see this in our example with Noah. The text says he **“constructed an ark for the saving of his household.”** Here, his obedience of faith brings salvation to his household. Then, we see condemnation. Our verse says, **“By this he condemned the world . . .”** The obedience of Noah, particularly his righteousness through building the ark and his witness (2 Pet. 2:5 “herald of righteousness”) we find both salvation and condemnation.

As Christians, as we are witnesses, as we are obedient to our Lord’s command to go and make disciples this is exactly what we will see. Some will listen and be saved. Others will not and be condemned. In 1 Cor. 1:18 Paul says, **“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.”** And in 2 Cor. 2:14-16: **“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.”**

Application: It is our responsibility to seek after our own salvation and those committed to us. We see this with Noah and his family. In other words, we begin with ourselves and then our own families and close acquaintances. I think of Peter’s first sermon after Pentecost. In Acts 2:39-40 he says, **“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, **“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”** And after beginning with ourselves and our own homes, we go out from there, all the way to the ends of the earth.

Let me end with some general applications from the faith of Noah.

Application: Faith holds onto things that are not seen. Faith believes God, whom we cannot see. And, faith believes in God's promises that are still yet future (they are also not seen). This is the context of Heb. 11. Look back at v. 1: "**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" Noah's faith is made evident as he believed the revelation of God about things unseen. Think about it. Human reason was completely opposed to God's revelation. So far, there had been no rain. Gen. 2:6 says there was a "**mist going up from the land and watering the whole face of the ground.**" Yes, there was water, but not like we have it today. To Noah, where would all this water come from? And for him to think that God would destroy all the inhabitants of the earth. Wow! Also, from the time of God's revelation to Noah to the flood was a very long time away. (Gen 6:3: 120 years). And Noah could have thought, the world will repent. And what do you think happened when he began to build the ark? I am sure the people ridiculed him and made fun of him. (I am sure would have lost his position on the city council.) And even if the ark would float, there was no mast, no sail, no rudder, no steering wheel, etc. And can you imagine being in a sealed room with you close family and you in-laws? My point is that faith sees the promise of God and believes, NO MATTER the carnal and "logical" objections of the world. Today, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, this is faith. Today, if you act in ways the world does not understand and does not agree with, you are a witness. You are walking by faith.

Application: God always uses means to accomplish his plans. If Noah had disobeyed, he would have perished in the flood. But, he listened and believed God and built the ark. And the ark was God's means to save Noah and his family. With God, there are always means to an end. Noah was not saved by works. Neither are we. Eph. 2:8-10 says, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**" Salvation is from God. But we must use the means he has provided. The farmer works the fields. But who brings the increase? So it is in spiritual things. Christ is the means to salvation. We must come through Him. This also works in our spiritual health. We read the word. We pray. We meet with God's people. We go and tell the world, etc. And when we do not use God's gracious means, what will happen?

Application: God will deliver his saints. Noah's deliverance is a big picture for us. The story of Noah is a beautiful picture of God's deliverance in Christ. This is the gospel! As Noah entered the ark for salvation, so we believe on the Lord Jesus to be saved. Noah wasn't merely saved from the flood. By faith he looked forward to the things unseen, to Christ. 1 Pet. 1:10-12 says, "**Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.**" Here, Peter says, the "Spirit of Christ" was in Him as he looked forward. Today, we look back. But, by faith in the same Christ, we also are saved from our sins and have been delivered from the wrath to come. And by faith we are witnesses in this world.

In summary, 1) To be a witness, there must be revelation from God. Today, we have the full revelation of God in Christ found in the full canon of Scripture. To be a witness, there must be an

internal and an external obedience. and to be a witness brings both salvation and condemnation as we live in this world.