



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:7

**Subject:** Part 30 – The work of Faith and the warning

The next in line of people marked by faith in Hebrews 11 is Noah. The more detailed account of Noah's life is found in Genesis chapters 6,7,8 and 9. He is mentioned in many other books of the bible such as 1 Chronicles 1:4, Ezekiel chapter 14:14, Isaiah 54:9 and also in the gospels of Matthew, Luke, 1st and 2nd Peter, as well as this Epistle to the Hebrews.

I have mentioned the old Testament references to underline that the Hebrews to whom this Epistle was written to, would have known very well the account of Noah, the ark and the judgement, hence, why the writer writes briefly about this account. He is not going into any great detail, but highlighting that Noah, as they knew, was a man of faith, he worked out his faith and God regarded him as righteous.

You see, many of the Jews in those day thought that this message of Salvation coming through faith by Grace alone was a new message. Throughout the history of the Jewish people, the religious system had become corrupt. It delved into occultic practices, paganism, had sources of ritual impurity and had irreligious Jews. Hence how the Pharisees came about. These emerged largely out of a group of scribes and sages. Their name comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic parush or parushi, meaning "one who is separated." From this, their legalism and

self-righteousness arrived, interpreting the law for themselves. The Sadducees were elitists who wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Hellenism into their lives, which the Pharisees opposed. The Essenes emerged out of disgust with the other two and moved out into the desert into a monastic life. They all put their hope in works, self-effort, moral and religious upstanding principles, traditions, nationality, ceremonies, rituals, their knowledge and conformity to the law but had little or no faith in God. God had always hated these things. Regardless of all their good intentions, they had moved away from God's word and God's way.

The writer of Hebrews, in this very chapter is pointing back to the dawn of history, underlining that it has always been by faith alone. This was not a new message but an old one forgotten. We have seen this by the illustration of Abel who worshipped by faith and Enoch who walked by faith. Now we are considering Noah, perhaps more than any other person in history, who illustrates amazingly the work of faith as well as the warning. These men came to God by faith, then went on to live by faith, trusting in God alone. True faith always has actions to support its claim. James chapter 2 verse 26 says –

***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”***

Earlier in the chapter, James condemned the man who says he has faith but who does nothing to help a fellow Christian in need. In order for faith to be valid, it must visibly radiate itself in good deeds. If you really believe in God, there will be evidence of it in the way you live, in the things you say, and in the things you do. Satan has continually tried to confuse and mislead people, including God's people, about faith and works. If possible, he will convince a person that he can be saved by doing certain good works. If this strategy works, the person will be lost to God. If a person trusts in God and is saved, Satan then tries to convince him of one of two extremes—that he must do good works to keep his salvation (which is legalism) or that, now that he is saved by faith, he can forget about good works (which is license). From Genesis to Revelation, however, the Bible is clear that a person is saved only by the right kind of faith which is based on God's terms, on God's word alone, and that when you repent making Jesus the Lord of your life, following him, and walk with him, good works should follow as a result. Like a train, you need the engine of Faith first then the carriages of good works will follow. Paul, who so strongly proclaimed justification by faith alone, also proclaimed a life of good

works for those who are justified. *"Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share"* (1 Timothy 6:18).

Believers are, in fact, *"created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Faith can only be seen in the things that it does and if it's true faith, it will do many good things. Noah was a man of faith, and his life continually showed his faith by his utter obedience to God.

Let's turn to Genesis chapter 6. From verses 1 to 7, we see God's grief. In verses 8 to 10, we see God's grace and in verses 11 to 22 we see God's guidance. God was grieved by man's wickedness. The earth had become so corrupt by sin, it was violent and continually evil. Satanic practices were flourishing, people were far removed from God and were more enamoured with the fallen angels. There were strange sights, behaviours and beliefs. People lived a long time in those days, and there were millions of people living in the world. God was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart, and so he decreed the 2<sup>nd</sup> most astounding thing to happen in global history (the 1<sup>st</sup> being the Creation of it), He decreed global judgment. As God declare destruction, he showed Grace by keeping his promised that he gave back in Genesis 3 verse 15, as we see in verse 8 – *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."* There was one man that God would use.

The next verse we see why, verse 9 - *"Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God"*

Noah was a "righteous man", "blameless in his time" and "walked with God" but he was still a sinner, a fallen son of Adam. We see this so clearly in his shameful display of drunkenness and immodesty when things began going well after the Flood in Genesis 9:20-21. He was saved because of God's "favour" and God's grace, working through his faith. Noah's righteousness, just as that of every believer before and after him, was "in the eyes of the LORD." Noah was counted righteous, justified by God's pure grace, applied because of faith. It is God's right to save whom He will, and He wills to save those who believe in His Son. He takes our faith and, by His grace, counts it as righteousness - Romans 4:5 says;

*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,*

Noah worshiped God faithfully, as Abel had, and he walked with God faithfully, as Enoch had. Noah trusted God in a time when the world was completely evil. God spoke to Noah and told him that he was going to destroy the earth, then he gave Noah instructions of what he wanted him to do. It's not until verse 17 that he told Noah that it was because He was going to flood the earth and destroy everything. Then in verse 18, He established a covenant with Noah, the first in the bible, that Noah and his family would be saved as well as how God was going to bring the animals that God wanted saved to him. God gave further instructions and then at the end of chapter 6, it says

***“Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.***

Three things in Hebrews 11:7 give us proof that Noah's faith was genuine. First, he responded to God's word. That is always a characteristic of true faith. Second, he condemned the world. He was such a man of God that his very life condemned the wicked people that surrounded him. Thirdly, he received God's righteousness. These are the classic marks of true faith.

Noah Responded to God's Word. As Hebrews 11 v 7 says:

***By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, (11:7a)***

Noah's faith was amazing. It was astonishing because of his absolute trust in God and because of his unhesitating and persistent obedience. Noah was unquestionably committed. It took 120 years for the ark to be built. It was a long-term project you could say. From the human perspective, it must have looked totally absurd and absolutely impossible. Those around him must have thought that he was crazy. Regardless of what it looked like, Noah believed God's warning, took God at His word and obeyed.

Noah was in the minority. When you are in the minority, it can be very difficult for you to have your voice heard and people can also think that you are the crazy one. We know from scripture that faith is trusting God even in the mist when you don't understand, you don't have all the details, hoping for the things unseen as we have already looked at in the first few verses of this chapter. When God gave Noah this revelation of coming judgement, there had never previously been a global catastrophe. Some experts say that the global weather conditions and patterns were different than what we have today. It was more tropically, not so much rain as a mist which we see in Genesis 2 verse 5 and 6 –

*For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; <sup>6</sup> but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*

Nothing such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis or the likes had ever been known. Regardless of that, Noah believed that God's word was true and judgement was on the way and he was willing to act on it because God said it. Most scholars, suggest that Noah may have lived in the area of Mesopotamia, and many suggest that he build the ark far from a body of water, far from a harbour. It is difficult to imagine how God's message must have sounded to Noah. To most of us it would have been so strange, so demanding, so embarrassing, so absolutely overwhelming, that we would have done anything to get out of it. Noah wasn't a ship builder nor was this even an ordinary ship. If we were in Noah's position, what would we have thought, or thought up to get out of doing it? Would we have been obedient like Noah, trusting God no matter what or would we have done our best to talk God out of the whole idea, or at least convince Him to get someone else for the job?

Noah, who had but a fraction of the divine light that we have, did not argue, quibble, make excuses, complain, or procrastinate. Noah's priorities in life changed once God spoke to him. Undoubtedly, Noah had to surrender most of his time, his resources, maybe even his personal ambitions had to be put on hold, because building the ark of that size was a huge task. Noah may not have had the obvious skills initially, but God does not need skills, He needs an obedient heart, a committed heart, a heart who is willing to follow him regardless of the ridicule or what others may think. Surely, we need to concern ourselves with what God thinks, not about what anyone else thinks.

We are told in Genesis 6 the detailed measurements, how many decks where to be built, the materials to be used, down to the widow and the door. Many people think that this account is only a story, but the precise details, measurements and the fact that every culture and ancient nation all over the world, from China to Peru, from Australia to Russia, details this as part of their history, would demonstrate grounds of evidence that it happened. While the modern world may not believe this story of Noah, the ark, his family and animals being saved from a global flood, the far more important question we need to ask is, what did Jesus believe? Did He believe that it was true and if so, how do we know? Luke 17 verse 26 and 27 tells us Jesus said – *And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son*

*of Man: <sup>27</sup> They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

Jesus tells us here, there was a time, a person, and an instrument of salvation. Jesus described the condition of the world at that time, business as usual, oblivious to the warning and to the means of escape.

It says here in Hebrews 11 verse 7 that by faith Noah prepared an ark for he was moved by godly fear, in other words, He was motivated by godly fear. This means that it was out of reverence, standing in awe of God, taking heed lest coming under judgement. Not fear, that says oh no he's going to kill me, but a godly fear to act in obedience to Him. Noah wanted to please God, because He knew who God is. There is very little of this in lives today, the understanding that God is Holy and we should therefore give Him our all.

Noah was able to save his household because he trusted God's word and God's warning. He just didn't trust and do nothing, but he worked out his faith. God wants all who belong to Him to do the same. He wants us to trust Him in the trial we are going through, the temptation we are facing, the decision we are making. The Lord has arks for every believer to build. It is just as important for us to build the ark He gives us as it was for Noah to build the one God assigned him. Our task may not be as big or as awesome or as time-consuming as Noah's, but it is the only one we can build that will please God. And, like Noah, when we build it in faith, according to God's plan and by His power, it will accomplish what God wants it to accomplish. Our work for the Lord may look foolish and purposeless in the world's eyes, like Noah's must have, but if it is His work, it will please Him, and as said before, God is the only one a believer needs to be concerned about pleasing.

By working out his Faith, Noah condemned the World as we see in verse 7 of Hebrews 11.

***'By faith Noah ... condemned the world. (11:7b)***

Why did Noah's faith condemn the world? God spoke to Noah, Noah believed God, and it was Noah's testimony of faith. He told a watching world of the coming judgement and the building of the ark was a constant reminder of that message. Noah we are told in 2 Peter 2 verse 5 was ***"a preacher of righteousness."*** He preached while he built. Hard jobs are always easier to deal with than hard people. The times in which Noah lived were the most evil and corrupt in history. Noah's day was so bad, God wanted to wipe it out completely. Jesus himself said, as

in the days of Noah, so shall it be in last days. I believe we are in the last days. Just look at the news, or even just around where you live, and not only are the days literally getting shorter but the evil seems to be increasing. Globally we can see a push to main stream things: economies, technology, religiosity, ethically, morally. People are saying Peace Peace, but there is no Peace.

Noah's job was to warn the people of his time that God would soon judge them because of their wickedness and unbelief. They had had the same opportunity to know God and His will as had Noah. The difference between Noah and everyone around him was not a difference in the amount of light but a difference in response to it. People have always rejected truth, for their preferences. People rejected Noah's warnings and his faith. People rejected Christ as Messiah. So how does our faith condemn the world today? Are we warning people of the coming judgment or of hell?

John 3:18 to 21 tells us –

*“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

Noah believed God, obeyed God and stood just in his faith and testimony and build the ark, despite the mockery, the abuse, the unbelief, besides their rejection of his testimony and warning. In the eyes of the watching world, Noah was a fool, why would anybody take their time, resources, and pour it into a useless project. They saw him building something for a body of water, for something they never experienced. Some people look at you like that, building a live for something they think will never happen. But what do you really believe about this world – Will it last? What do you believe about yourself? What is the focus of your life? What are you trusting to answer the questions that trouble you? What is it that will save you? Science, technology, yourself, possessions, knowledge, pleasure? Do you ridicule when judgement is preached? Do you run when people ask the question, is there a God? Will he judge the world, will He judge me? What will God find in your heart? Will he find what he found in Noah's day? That every imagination of thought was evil continually? Jesus used this

account as a tool to explain the end of days, as the warning came to be, so will the warning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judgment as 2 Peter 3v10 describes, will come about.

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

Yes, God promised he would never flood the earth again, but He did say, next time it will be by fire. The only security is refuge in God's ark, Jesus Christ.

Righteousness and sin cannot co-exist. God cannot establish righteousness until sin is destroyed. As always, the Lord's judgment was tempered by His mercy. As God decreed destruction, he soon announced construction and then restoration. God is so merciful. 1 Peter 3 verse 20 says –

*"The patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark" (1 Peter 3:20).*

God allowed 120 years for the people to be warned and to repent, thereby staying the judgment and remember Methuselah whose death prophesied judgement, and he was the longest living person ever in history. The people had no excuse for their sin before Noah began building the ark, and they had even less excuse after he finished. One hundred and twenty years, even when men sometimes lived to be nearly a thousand, was more than ample time for anyone to repent who wanted to repent.

C.H. Spurgeon said, *"He who does not believe God will punish sin will not believe that he will pardon it through atoning blood."*

Many people are glad to hear about God's gracious promises but want to hear nothing of His judgment. Spurgeon went on to say, *"I charge you who profess the Lord not to be unbelieving with regard to the terrible threatening's 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, disbelieving God at one point will drive you to disbelieve God upon the other points of revealed truth."*

God's warning of judgment had a merciful aspect. For the sake of the believing remnant on earth in Noah's day, the Lord had to cut out the malicious and destructive spiritual cancer or

it would have overwhelmed the world. Against that wicked, cruel, and dark world, Noah's life and testimony shined in glistening condemnation. Black never seems so black as when white is put beside it. The man of faith rebukes the world just by his living, even if he never utters a word of reproach. A young man of Athens told Socrates, *"I hate you, because every time I meet you, you show me what I am."*

Perhaps the saddest lesson from Noah's day is that men have not changed in their attitude towards God since then, and will not change until the Lord returns.

*"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37 to 39).*

The parallels of Noah's day to our own are sobering. In Noah's day God's message was rejected, as it is today. In his day, wickedness, immorality, violence, lewdness, vulgarity, profanity, lying, killing, and blasphemy were rampant, as they are today. In his day a remnant found grace, just as a remnant of believers today. In Noah's day or shortly before it, Enoch was translated, picturing the rapture of believers when the Lord returns, which could be in our day. We can be as sure as they should have been that judgment is coming, because God has promised it as clearly and men deserve it just as much. After the warning of the next global judgement, 2 Peter 3 v 11 to 13 challenges us –

*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

The believers reward, is the new heaven and a new earth. We read in the rest of Hebrews 11 verse 7 that Noah's reward was that -

*Noah became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (11:7c)*

Noah's faith was proved by his receiving God's righteousness, which is only bestowed on those who trust in Him. All who believe in God are righteous, not always in practice but always in position. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us by faith (Romans 3:22). The Father sees us

as He sees the Son, holy and righteous, because by faith we are in the Son. If we put on coloured glasses, everything we look at will appear that colour. God looks at believers through the lens of His Son, and He sees us as He sees the Son. Thousands of years before Jesus became incarnate, God looked at Noah and saw the Son, because Noah believed. This account ought to have stirred the listener, particularly the none Christian Jews and the intellectually convinced but still unconverted ones. They would have as children been told of this account but the problem than as now, they were told as stories not true facts.

The ark symbolizes many of God's future dealings with men. The Hebrew word for pitch, for example, has the same root (ko-fer) as that used for atonement. The pitch kept the waters of judgment from entering the ark just as Christ's atoning blood keeps judgment from the sinner. The ark is a beautiful picture of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. The ark was the only way to be saved in a world destined to die and now Jesus is the only way, the only solution. God came up with the idea of the ark, God revealed it to Noah, He revealed the instructions to build it. Did Noah have a role? Absolutely, he had to build it. Noah had to build the ark, feed the animals, tidy up, not because he was afraid of getting kicked out of the ark, but because he wanted to obey God. The ark was fore-known, fore-ordained and given to Noah by the Word of the Lord. Noah had no part in planning of the ark but the building of it. God also fore-knew and fore-ordained Christ to become the Saviour of our Soul even before the foundation of the earth.

As M.R. DeHaan wrote: *"The Saviour must be both God and Man. He must be man to atone for man's sin; He must be God to bear the infinite penalty of man's sin. Because He was a man, He could stand in man's place. Because He was God, He could bear in a few hours the eternal, infinite judgment of God upon sin. Millenniums later the One who foreshowed by all this came into the world- the product of a human being, call in the Scripture the Seed of the woman. The Apostle Paul makes it crystal clear in Galatian 4: 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'"*

Did Noah know the promise of Genesis 3:15? Yes, he would have and it is the reason Noah found Grace, Why? Because God made a promise.



Jesus is our perfect ark, our perfect Saviour. Do you think the ark was safe or unsafe? It was safe because God came up with the plans to bear the storms and weather the judgement. In that sense so is our Saviour. Interestingly if you read Genesis 7v1 you will see that it says that God said to Noah "Come into the ark". In fact, it's the first time in the bible that we see God say that. And it implies, that God was already in the ark, bidding Noah and his family to enter.

Why was the ark safe? God created it. Why was the ark secure? God was inside it. The ark couldn't fail because God's presence was in there. It reminds us of Jesus in the boat with the apostles in Matthew 8 and a storm arose and they were terrified but the Lord was in the boat, so it couldn't sink. You know, if God is in your life, regardless of how bad the storms are, he won't let you sink, you may feel like you are going under but one day it will be part of your testimony how God kept you, glorifying Him, that it was all Him and not you. God ensures us that we can trust him to weather the storms in this life, and escape judgment. Do you know that the last time that invitation to Come is in Revelation 22 verse 17 and it says –

*And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

Both invitations are to escape judgment. The first was to escape water, the kind that would kill you, and the last was to drink the water that can save you. So, the ark is safe and secure. Did the ark have sails, motor, pilot house, rudder? No. Why? That's because God directed it. Some people believe that the ark had to go through the motions of the storm, being tossed all over the place. But don't be mistaken, God was in control, it was carefully steered by God to rest on Mount Ararat. The same Person who said come into the ark, the same who says come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest, is the same who was in control and guided the ark to Mount Ararat, and took Jesus to Calvary. Even when all hell seemed to run riot, no matter what it seemed like to everyone else, God was in control. No matter what the storms, the hurricane, the waves looked like, no matter what the priests did, the conspiracies, the soldiers, the people's crises looked like, God was in control. And He is still in control! Noah remained safe, so we remain save in Jesus once we trust Him, accept His invitation to come and obey Him – Philippians 2:12-13

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and*

*trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

God doesn't place your safety and security into anyone's hands. God gave clear and precise instructions which naval engineers have in the last 20 years or so have discovered that the dimensions and shape of the ark form is the most stable ship design known. The ark was not designed for manoeuvrability but for stability in order to best protect those within it. Jesus is safe and secure, and He will take you to that place of stability if you heed to his commands and his warnings. Os Guinness remarked –

*“Some people think that having reasons for faith is an insult to God. But verification itself depends on the unchanging authority and stability of the Word of God. We are not insulting God but bringing glory to him taking his Word as the stable authoritative truth it is”*

There is a storm and judgment coming, only those who are safe in Jesus will be secure. There was only one Ark, not a fleet to choose from. There was only one door into the Ark. There was only one way that was safe and secure and required an invitation. Jesus said “I am the door”. Jesus only opens and shuts the door.

Hebrews 11:7 explains to us that God helped Noah prepare, gave him guidance and his reward – His family was saved but the world remained condemned. The People perished. Salvation has always been by Grace through faith. It wasn't just believing what God mentioned, but believing everything. Faithfulness is rewarded by fruitfulness (Romans 5:1, Philippians 3:9). Noah was found in a safe and secure place which God revealed. The purpose of Scripture is to reveal Jesus over and over again – Let's draw close in full assurance. God gave Noah a Rainbow as a sign of assurance, but the earth will be destroyed by fire. Like Noah we need to go into the ark that has been provided.

Abel an excellent sacrifice, Enoch an excellent walk, Noah warned a watching world and worked out his Faith. Like Noah, we do have to step out in faith and work out our salvation, allowing God to use us in the way He wants to, give our all to him and our faithfulness will be rewarded.

*Amen.*