

# Hebrews

## Preparing for Judgment by Faith

### Hebrews 11:7

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#### INTRODUCTION:

People who live in the Southeastern part of the United States are very familiar with hurricanes. With today's technology, they can know that one is on the way, approximately **where** it will make contact with the mainland, approximately **when** it will arrive, approximately **how strong** it will be, and whether they are among the people who will need to abandon their homes and flee for their lives. States have been known to turn all four lanes of the Interstate into a northbound one-way highway in order to accommodate the thousands that are escaping.

It would be wonderful if people responded to God's warnings about future judgment with that same fervor! The Bible is not fuzzy about the threat. The apostle Paul told the Athenians...

#### **Acts 17:30-31 (NASB95)**

*<sup>30</sup> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

The book of Revelation is largely devoted to the theme of future judgment. When Jesus comes again our opportunity to accept Christ will end and our new eternity will begin. Are you taking the warning seriously and preparing for the wrath to come?

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

#### **Hebrews 11:7 (NASB95)**

*<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

#### Prayer

Anybody that knows even a little bit about the Bible knows about Noah and the flood. It is part of our popular culture. But how many that know about Noah and the flood take its warning to heart? Our text brings up Noah's faith as an example. It teaches us that...to be saved, we **must** by faith, obediently respond to God's warnings of future judgment!

Our text reveals **the basis, the effects, and the consequences** of Noah's faith. The author wants us to be imitators of this man, who through faith and patience inherited the promises of God. Of all the examples of faith in Hebrews 11, this is the only one in which

the unseen future involves judgment, rather than rewards. It shows us that faith regards both God's warnings and His promises. God only brings judgment after multiple warnings, but many will be surprised when judgment comes, because they ignored the warnings. But, people of faith heed the warnings.

## **I. The Basis of Noah's Faith.**

The basis of Noah's faith was that he truly believed God's word regarding the coming judgment in the way of a flood.

You can see a hurricane warning on TV. The radar picture shows a huge mass of swirling clouds heading toward where you live. They report the wind speed. **IT is all quite visible.** But,

### **A. God's Word of Warning Concerns Things not Yet Seen.**

Do you remember how faith was defined back in verse 1 of this chapter?

#### **Hebrews 11:1 (NASB95)**

11 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, **the conviction of things not seen.**

God warned Noah "**about things not yet seen**". Without belief and faith God's warning would have seemed incredible. Before Noah's day it had never rained, let alone a flood. A vapor canopy covered the planet and a mist rose from the earth and watered the ground.

#### **Genesis 2:5-6 (NASB95)**

<sup>5</sup> Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. <sup>6</sup> But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

So the warning about a flood that would kill all life on earth was unprecedented and unseen. To those apart from Noah's family it seemed totally absurd. This ties into our Bible study on Thursday night in Ecclesiastes where those who are "under the sun", or those who are trying to live according to their experiences on earth, do not understand the folly of trying to find a purpose for life without God. The course of our life would be sheer folly without God's promise of heaven and His warnings of hell.

Faith hears the word of the unseen God regarding events that are not yet seen and brings them into our present experience. Faith in God believes that He is able to guard the deposit that we have entrusted to Him until that day.

Faith lays up treasures in heaven, where they are eternally secure.

#### **Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB95)**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In fact, Paul tells us that if the resurrection of our bodies and eternity with God in heaven are myths, then "**we are of all men most to be pitied**".

The world should be able to look at our lives—how we spend our time and money—and say, as they no doubt said about Noah, “This guy is nuts! He lives as if there **really** is a coming judgment!”

## **B. God’s Warning Concerning Judgment was Delayed but Absolutely Certain.**

God’s showed great patience before He brought judgment on this wicked earth. The earth was so wicked that God could have destroyed it on the spot. But in His grace and patience, He delayed judgment for over a century, while Noah built the ark.

Peter tells us that in the end times there will be mockers just as Noah's day.

### **2 Peter 3:4,9**

<sup>4</sup> ...“Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” But, as Peter goes on to explain...<sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

So the delay of God’s judgment is because of His great patience and grace. But do not mistake the delay for uncertainty! Noah could have thought, “One hundred years is a long ways off,” and procrastinated on building the ark. But he did not do that. As soon as he heard God’s warning about the coming judgment, he went to work building the ark. on dry land while all of the time being ridiculed by the world around him? It seemed crazy to the world, but it all suddenly made sense when the sky began to pour rain and the fountains of the deep opened up. And then it was too late to do anything about it!

Jesus said...

### **Matthew 24:37-39 (NASB95)**

<sup>37</sup> For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

The people of Noah’s day went on with the normal activities of life, oblivious to the repeated warnings of judgment, until it was too late. The Book of Revelation shows that this evil world will be going on full steam ahead, doing business, pursuing pleasure, and scoffing at the idea of a coming judgment. But in an instant, judgment will fall. It will be thorough and completely devastating.

The basis of Noah’s faith was God’s word of warning about things not yet seen. These things were delayed, but certain.

## **C. God’s Word of Warning Trumped the World’s Condemnation.**

The bottom line for Noah was either to believe the evil people around him, who seemed to be having a great time sinning, or to believe what God said about the coming judgment. As far as Scripture records, he had no others to stand with him, except for his immediate family. Although Scripture does not record it, there can be no doubt that the world would have ridiculed a man who spent a fortune over a century building a huge ship on dry ground, miles from any ocean! It must have been the best entertainment for miles around,

to go over and watch old Noah work on his ship! There are some pretty crazy men in this world, but Noah had to be near the top of the list!

But in spite of having no friends to support him in his labors, and in spite of over a century of being thought of as the world's greatest nut case, **Noah believed the word of God**. That is the kind of faith that escapes the judgment that is yet coming on this evil world. You must stand alone, if need be, against the mockery of the world, and believe that God's Word is true! The basis for Noah's faith and for ours is the word of God. Count it as true!

## II. The Effects of Noah's Faith.

Verse 7 continues, "**in reverence [Noah] prepared an ark.**" Noah's faith changed his affections; and, it changed his actions. Out of reverential fear, Noah steadfastly obeyed God's directive about salvation.

### A. Noah's Faith Changed His Perspective of God.

Noah's faith in God's warning moved him to reverential fear of God. Noah did not just fear the impending judgment; he also feared the God who threatened such judgment, knowing that He is fully capable of bringing it about. The God who spoke the universe into existence out of nothing is quite capable of commanding a flood to destroy all human life on earth. Faith in this omnipotent God should move our hearts to reverential fear.

Genuine religion is not just a matter of the head, but also of the heart. If we have genuine faith in God, we will not only be moved by love in response to His great love; we also will be moved by reverential fear in response to His holiness and of His impending judgment.

### B. Noah's Faith Changed His Actions.

"**In reverence [he] prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.**" There is a whole lot of obedience packed into that short phrase, "he prepared an ark"! Sometimes you hear about a guy who builds a fishing boat in his back yard, but Noah built an ocean liner! It was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high! Can you imagine what Mrs. Noah must have thought when her husband told her what he planned to do? This was not a weekend hobby; it was all-consuming for 120 years! Think of the excuses that Noah (not to mention Mrs. Noah) could have used to argue with God: "It will cost too much!" "It's not feasible!" "It will take too long!" "How will I support my family while I'm building this thing?" "A boat that size will never float". But Noah set aside all excuses and persevered in obedience until it was done.

Some may think of faith as an impractical sort of thing. But Noah's faith took up axe, hammer, and saw and built a ship in his back yard! His faith cost him a lot of time, money, and ridicule for over a century. Peter tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Perhaps he stopped his work at times to preach to the mockers who gathered to watch this incredible sight. But he did not allow the jeers or the lack of response to his message to stop him. His **faith** caused him **to do** all that God had commanded him.

There are those who argue that our salvation comes by belief in Jesus Christ as your Savior through faith alone, apart from any works.

But they are badly mistaken about the nature of **saving** faith. We **are** saved by faith alone, but genuine **saving** faith by its very nature always results in a radical change of

heart and habits. James tells us that faith that does not result in good works is dead. Many Christians have memorized **Ephesians 2:8-9** which says...

### **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB95)**

**<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

But we should also memorize the next verse as well.

### **Ephesians 2:10 (NASB95)**

**<sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

Noah could have said, "I believe that God is going to judge the whole world with a terrible flood." But if he had not built the ark and climbed on board, he would have perished in the flood. To save himself and his household from the flood, Noah had to translate his faith into a long obedience of building the ark. In the same way, a faith that saves us from the wrath to come, out of reverential fear, persists in obedience to Jesus Christ.

The **basis** of Noah's faith was that he believed God's word about the coming judgment. The **effects** of his faith were a change in his reverence toward God and in his actions. Now we will explore the **consequences** of Noah's faith.

## **III. The Consequences of Noah's Faith.**

As a result of Noah's faith, he saved his family, he condemned the world, and he became an heir of righteousness according to faith.

### **A. By faith, Noah Saved His Family.**

The story in Genesis does not mention the **spiritual** salvation of Noah's family, but only about the fact that they were saved from drowning in the flood. But at the very least, his wife and sons and their wives, must have believed enough in what Noah told them to join him in the ark. It would have been easy for them to become embarrassed about their weird father and be swayed by the taunts of the world. They could have moved to a different locale, distanced themselves from their father, and they would have perished in the flood. They believed enough to stay with him and get on board when God gave the command. Noah's faith in God had a powerful effect on his family.

Scripture gives no absolute guarantees that all of our children will be saved. But while we have no guarantees, the Bible is clear that a godly father has a powerful influence on his children. The Bible declares that Noah was a righteous man of integrity ("**blameless**"), who walked with God. So to those of us who are fathers, if you live a godly life, it will be a powerful influence toward saving your children and family from this evil generation.

### **B. By Faith, Noah's Life and Words Condemned the World.**

Noah condemned the world in the sense that his righteous life of faith exposed their unrighteous lives of unbelief, thus aggravating their guilt. Noah did not have a judgmental, holier-than-thou spirit. He knew that he was a sinner saved by God's grace. But his life of obedient faith was like a bright light taken into a dark cave. It exposed all of the bats hanging in there! If it had not been for Noah, perhaps someone from that godless

generation could have argued, "But I never knew how to live in a godly manner. I never heard about God's impending judgment." But Noah robbed them of all their excuses.

As Christians, we should never display a judgmental spirit towards this sinful world. Except for God's grace, we would still be in our sins. But, as light in the Lord, it is inevitable that we will expose the evil deeds around us. As believers we should be **different** than this evil world. We should not watch the same movies and TV shows that the world watches. We should not fill our minds with scenes of sensuality and violence. Someone may object, "If I don't stay up on where the world is at, how can I interact intelligently with worldly people?" **My answer:** you can learn all you need by reading the reviews. When worldly people ask, "Did you see the latest "R-rated" movie?" you should reply, "I don't go to R-rated movies." Then watch their jaws drop open, and be ready to tell them about God's holiness and the coming judgment. If you are thinking, "How **out of it** can you get?" the answer is, "**Out of it** enough that you would build an ark in the desert to avoid God's judgment if you had to!"

### **C. By Faith, Noah Became an Heir of Righteousness According to Faith.**

The word **righteous** is used in two ways in the Bible. It is used of the **righteousness of faith**, or **imputed** righteousness. When a person trusts in Christ as his sin-bearer, God credits the righteousness of Jesus Christ to his account. This is a judicial action, where God not only declares us "not guilty," but also "positively righteous," because we receive an alien righteousness, that of Jesus Christ.

The word **righteous** is also used of the **right conduct** that stems from being declared righteous by faith. When **Genesis 6:9** says that Noah was righteous and blameless, it is referring to his godly life that flowed out of his being justified by faith.

He did not find favor with God **because of** his righteous life, but rather, because of the favor, or grace, granted to him by God, he **lived** a righteous life. **(Repeat)**

Noah was an **heir** of the righteousness according to faith in the sense that he possessed the title to it, but he did not receive the reward of the inheritance until he died. As believers in Christ, we are heirs with Him, but we do not actually get the inheritance until we are with Him in heaven.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Just as the ark was the **only** means of salvation from God's judgment for Noah and his family, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the **only way** that God has provided for salvation from His coming judgment on the whole world. Everyone on board the ark was saved. Everyone not on the ark was lost. Everyone who has trusted in Christ's shed blood will be saved. Everyone who has trusted in anything else will be lost. In Noah's day, it was not a matter of being an excellent swimmer! As Bill Cosby used to tell the story, God asks Noah, "**How long** can you tread water?" You cannot be good enough to merit salvation. The crucial question is, "By faith have you obediently responded to God's warning by preparing for the judgment to come?"

God has issued a clear warning: A "Category 5" storm of judgment is heading toward everyone who dwells on earth! The door of His ark is still open. Flee to Christ and you will be saved. Scoff at the warning and you will be lost forever. Imitate Noah's faith and obedience. Join him as an heir of the righteousness according to faith.

**What a Day That Will Be!**