

# Noah—Faith that Embraces God’s Warnings

Hebrews 11:7

*Halifax: 13 August 2023*

## **Introduction:**

Today we are returning to our sermon series in Hebrews.

- Since we have been away from this series for four weeks, I want to remind you what we have seen in this letter.
- You will remember that it does not begin with a salutation or a greeting... it gets straight to the point.
  - Right from the start it presents Jesus Christ as the one who is the object of our faith now that He has come from heaven to save us. God has spoken to us by His Son.
  - In a way, He was always the object of our faith, but under the old covenant, He was presented in the shadows and ceremonies of temple rituals.
    - Now He has come in the flesh to be the great apostle and high priest of our faith.
  - He is superior in every way because He is the Son of God who not only testifies to God’s way of salvation, but who actually procures salvation.
    - He is superior to the angels because He is God’s Son.
    - He is superior to Adam because He has been given dominion over creation.
    - He is superior as our leader because He is the captain of our salvation.
    - He is superior to Moses as the apostle from heaven who builds the house of God.
    - He gives us a superior to rest to the rest in Canaan.
    - He is superior as a priest because He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, a priest with no beginning and no ending so that He ever lives to make intercession.
    - He has a superior priesthood with a superior offering (His own blood shed for sin) offered in a superior tabernacle (not a temple made by man, but in the presence of God Himself).
    - He is the superior as the one who came to do God’s will, and did it, unlike any other.
- At Hebrews 10:19, we came to the exhortation of this epistle. From here to the end of the letter, we are exhorted to trust in Him for our eternal salvation.
  - He alone is able to secure our pardon.
  - He alone is able to bring us to God forever.

Now we are in chapter 11 where faith that saves is presented to us.

- We saw in the beginning of this chapter what faith does.
  - that it brings God into our lives—we respond to Him as He is revealed.
  - that it transforms our whole life—to live with reference to God our Maker.
  - that it gives knowledge to us of God as Creator by whom we have our being.
  - that by it we know God as our redeemer who makes us righteous—as can be seen in the life of Abel.
  - and that by it, we are exalted to glory, as can be seen by Enoch.

Abel and Enoch are the first two examples or witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11.

- Noah, whom we look at today, is the third witness to the blessing that comes by faith.

- He shows us how faith responds to God's warning of judgment.
- Our text today is only one verse—Hebrews 11:7.
  - Please listen with thanksgiving to God's holy word.

**Heb 11:7: By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**

Thanks be to God for His holy word.

We have an account of Noah in Genesis 6-9.

- We read chapter 6 earlier and saw how Noah was told to build the ark because of the flood that God was sending in response to the wickedness of man.
- Here, Hebrews teaches us that he did all this by faith—because he believed when God warned of coming judgment.
  - I remind you what I have told you already about the men who are listed in this section. They are not presented merely as curious historical specimens.
  - They are presented to teach us about the way we act when we have true saving faith—and to show us what faith does and the blessings it brings to us.
    - Noah shows us how true faith responds to God's warnings.
    - We will consider these five things today about faith.
      - First, that faith hears divine warnings.
      - Second, that faith fears God.
      - Third, that faith responds to God's gracious call of salvation.
      - Fourth, that faith condemns the world.
      - Fifth, that faith inherits righteousness.

Let's get underway, looking to God to work faith in us as we look at how it responds to God's warnings.

- So the first way it responds...

### **I. Faith hears divine warnings.**

- We are told that Noah was divinely warned of things not seen.

#### **A. Hearing God is essential to faith.**

1. There is a sense in which faith is simply a feeling or sense that things will come out okay—or that something good will happen—"I have faith that I will go to heaven."
  - This is true about faith as far as it goes. But faith can be without a foundation.
  - A person might believe that they can fly—they have faith that they can do it, but when they jump off the building without a parachute, they will see that they were quite mistaken.
    - They had faith, sure enough, but it came from their own delusion.
2. Some have faith in what they have heard from various sources.
  - Perhaps they have heard the popular notion that when we die, we all go to a better place—unless we were really bad.

- This is what you hear many clerics declare at funerals.
    - They will say of atheists, blasphemers, adulterers, and swindlers, that now their suffering is over. They have gone to a better place.
    - I tell you that there are many souls in hell who believed that when they heard it. It was something they wanted to believe.
3. But Biblical faith hears God.
- Romans 10 teaches that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
    - It is based on what God says about things, not on how we feel about them or what others have told us out of their own heads.
    - It is a resting in divine testimony which is certain.
  - God is very gracious in speaking to us. He has not been silent.
    - We greatly err if we do not listen and receive all that He says, both the negative things that we may not like, as well as the positive things that may seem too good to be true.
      - It is all too easy for us to doubt—to say, “Will God really send people to hell?” or “Will God really save us from our sins if we trust in Christ?”
- B. God brings His word to us. It is His gracious work to do so.
1. He brings it to us in many different ways.
    - a. Noah had the rare blessing of hearing God directly—the way God speaks to prophets.
      - He was divinely warned that the LORD had seen the great wickedness of man and was going to destroy the whole earth with a great flood.
      - God spoke directly to him.
    - b. Most of us hear His word through others—through prophets.
      - God has chosen to speak in that way.
      - In the NT, He speaks through the prophets who wrote scripture, and He has sent men to preach from the scriptures.
      - One reason He does not speak to each individual is because He wants to bring us together. He does not want us to be isolated and independent, each receiving private revelation, He wants us to receive His truth together.
        - We are way too independent as it is already. He wants us to be a worshipping growing body of believers.
    - c. We are responsible to listen to God however He speaks. We should be always yearning to hear our Creator, even if it is in more indirect ways.
      - For example, we are told in Psalm 19 that the heavens declare His handiwork. Everyone hears the “voice of creation” testify of God.
        - In Romans 1, we are told that God reveals His eternal power and divine nature not only through creation, but also through the affliction that He sends on us now. Death itself testifies that we have sinned.

- Romans 1 & 2 tell us that He also uses our conscience—our sense wrong that we have done wrong—even if it is not always accurate, we all know that we do wrong.
  - We often resist these ways of speaking to our own hurt.
    - When we do that, we harden our hearts against the truth.
    - Then, if God should bring His prophetic word—expose us to what is now in the Scripture, we are already hardened against His message.
      - On the other hand, if by His grace we have begun to hear and believe what He reveals through nature, He will always bring us more revelation and we will be ready to receive it.
      - Of course, the word can break in on us and radically transform us, but often God does a work of preparation in us.
2. One way or another, when He wishes to save us, He brings His word to us in an irresistible way so that we receive it as the word of God.
- The truth is self-attesting when the Holy Spirit works. The Spirit and the Word bear witness with our conscience that it is true and we believe.
  - Jesus told us in John 16 that the Spirit would convince us of sin, righteousness and judgment—and He certainly does.
    - When you have true faith, you receive the warnings, the promises, and the commandments—you hear them and know that they are divine.
    - Like Noah, you hear the divine warning. It is brought to you and you hear it as the word of God. Often the Spirit even works in those who are not elect to convince them of these things, but those who are appointed to salvation hear and believe.
- C. It is emphasised that the warning Noah received was of things not yet seen.
1. This was radically so.
- It seems that God sent little disturbance in the ancient world—people lived a long time and enjoyed a great deal of prosperity.
  - But whether that was so or not, the flood God told Noah about was a flood like no other—the fountains of the deep broke forth so that water came up from the ground and the rain continued for 40 days and 40 nights.
  - It was a huge disturbance such as had never been seen before. Such a flood changed the whole earth—raising up great mountains and creating valleys.
    - A flood like this had never been seen. and, according to God’s testimony, will never be seen again.
    - It covered what was the highest mountain at that time before forming the great mountains we have today.
  - But the great thing about faith—and the faith of Noah—is that he believed that this would happen because God told him that it would happen.
2. We have a similar testimony from God today. He has testified that on the day of judgment the earth will be cleansed by fire!

- We are told in 2 Peter 3:10 that: **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.**
- Peter testifies of how men mock at this warning, forgetting what God did in the day of Noah—an event that is found in the historical records of many ancient societies with the ark and all. They are willingly ignorant.
- Do you hear God? Do you have faith to hear that He will judge by fire? Does this impact you the way it impacts those who have saving faith?

➤ This brings us to the next thing.

## II. Faith fears God.

A. Noah not only heard the warning, but he was also moved with godly fear.

- Just what does that mean?
  1. It means that he believed that God would do what He said He would do, even though it was like nothing that had ever happened.
    - He respected God as the one who could and would carry out this great act.
  2. Perhaps even more than that, it put trembling in him to think about it.
    - He saw how angry God was with human sin, and instead of avoiding this uncomfortable truth, he took the matter to heart.
    - When you fear God, you essentially realise that He has authority to bless and to curse—to make it either very good or very bad for you.
  3. Think about how this works when you are with another person.
    - You fear them if you realise that they carry a lot of weight in regard to your life.
      - That without their favour, you will be ruined—even if they are neutral toward you—but especially if they are against you.
      - And that with their favour, you will have great benefits.
    - You see them as someone who has the ability makes a huge difference in your well-being.

➤ So Noah's moving influence was that he feared God. He acted on God's warning because he feared God as the one who could either bless or curse.

B. What makes people of faith stand out from others is that they fear God before judgment falls.

1. Truly, everyone will be terrified when the day comes, and God's judgment is unleashed.
  - Once the judgment falls, it will be too late to repent and be saved.
  - There will be nothing but terror and anguish.
  - There will be no hope. Ominous words! 'No hope!' Only the prospect of ruin!
2. How much better is it to fear God *before* the judgment begins.
  - Then you can take action to prepare for the judgment.

- That is what those who fear God do.
- And that brings us to the next thing that faith does when it hears God’s warnings.
- III. Faith responds to God’s gracious call of salvation.**
- A. God’s warnings are sent in mercy to give us an opportunity to repent.
1. All warnings are like that.
    - They are designed to steer you away from some danger or some difficulty that you will encounter if you don’t take action.
    - When a little child is about to touch a hot object, a parent says, “Don’t touch that, it will hurt you.”
  2. I explained to you before that warnings, in many ways, are more for the elect than they are for the reprobate.
    - God uses them to keep His people from doing what would otherwise bring about their destruction and apostasy.
      - They are real—that if we should go in the ways that we are warned about, it will lead to destruction.
      - But the elect hear these warnings and they steer away from the destruction and so are kept by God’s gracious hand.
    - His preservation of us is done in this dynamic way—where real dangers are warned about, and real action is taken to avoid the danger.
- B. Noah certainly did take action—
1. We are told that he prepared an ark for the saving of his household.
    - It was a huge task that probably dominated his whole life for the one hundred and twenty years from the time when God told him about the flood until the time that He sent the flood.
    - In a matter of such importance, you certainly don’t want to take no action!
      - You believe what God has said and you act upon it.
      - A day of judgment by fire is coming. It is time to act!
  2. This is where many people go wrong.
    - They hear God’s warning and they may even believe it at a certain level, but they procrastinate, supposing that they will get around to it soon.
    - But I warn you that if you do not get on with repenting and turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, you will perish in the judgment along with the most obnoxious blasphemers.
      - The Proverb is true—the road to hell is often paved with good intentions.
  3. Noah did not try to figure out another way to save himself either.
    - When you fear God, you recognise that God’s way is the only way.
      - In a matter so important as the saving of you and your household, you don’t want to take matters into your own hands.
    - The LORD has been gracious to provide us with a way of salvation and to reveal it to us.

- We are very foolish if we begin to tweak it to suit our own preferences.
- We may tweak it so much that we will actually miss God’s salvation.
- That is how liberal churches got to where they are today—many tweaks.
- The Hebrews that this letter is written to were tempted to tweak God’s salvation so that they could remain in the favour of their fellow Jews.
  - But as Paul said in Galatians, if you rely on circumcision and observing the law, Christ will profit you nothing.
  - Perhaps you have pressure from family or friends to deny this or that aspect of the gospel or of God’s ways...
    - It is the path that leads to destruction! I warn you before God!
    - Think about Saul who was ruined because he took it upon himself to offer sacrifices even though he was not appointed as a priest.
    - Taking matters into his own hands undid him—it was a manifestation of a lack of true faith that brings salvation.

TRANS> The next thing we are told concerning Noah is that:

#### **IV. Faith condemns the world.**

A. There is Noah, building this monstrous ark because he believes water is going to fall from the sky and erupt from that earth to drown everyone.

1. As we have seen, he does this by faith—because he believes what God says.
  - He believes that the world is wicked, as God says.
  - He believes that God is going to judge, as God says.
  - He believes that God will save him and his household by means of this ark—so he goes on building.
2. You can imagine the opposition and ridicule that would have been heaped upon him.
  - Guilty consciences in many probably made them all the more obnoxious.
  - But by faith, Noah went on building.
  - He did not fear man. He feared God. He knew that what God thought was much more important than what his neighbours thought.
    - Do you have such faith? Is God so real to you that you count it a very little thing for anyone else to be displeased with you as long as you please God?

B. By simply going on with his project, Noah condemned the world.

1. He exposed their hardness of heart and their unbelief that made them reckless and unwilling to respond to God.
  - Day after day, his actions testified to the world that they were condemned and needed to seek God’s salvation.
- But Noah did more than quietly build the ark.
2. In 2 Peter, we are told that he also preached to his neighbours.
  - In 2 Peter 2:5, he is called “a preacher of righteousness.”
    - He did not hide God’s warning, nor did he leave people to guess why he had decided to build this giant ark—literally a box with no mast, no sails, and no rudder.

- He told them of God's way of salvation and of God's coming judgment.
    - Do you include God's judgment when you speak to others, or do you leave that part out? If you do, your faith is deficient.
  - Noah cared for his fellow man and he preached, calling them to repent, but their response made it all the worse for them.
    - By his preaching, he exposed all the more how wicked and hard of heart they were.
    - He filled up the measure of their sins making them ripe for judgment.
      - As Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin," that is, their sin would not be ripe for judgment the way it was now that they had rejected Him.
- C. Likewise, you condemn the world by believing and proclaiming the gospel.
1. Here, God has warned us of an even greater judgment that is coming.
    - He has done this as a measure of grace and mercy that sinners may be saved. All who are appointed to salvation will hear and be saved.
  2. He has also shown us the way of salvation in Christ.
    - By embracing that way and proclaiming that way, you expose the hardness of men's hearts. You condemn the world simply by trying to help them.
    - Not that it is your goal to condemn them, but that is the result when they oppose the truth.
  3. Do not be surprised if they are hostile.
    - Their guilt makes them hostile.
      - Do not be surprised and do not let it deter you.
      - True faith condemns the world in its unbelief and they feel it.
    - Do not think you have done something wrong when the world opposes you.
      - Do not let Satan deceive you and cause you to shut up.
    - Not only will you contribute to the salvation of many by your testimony, but you will also strengthen your faith and the faith of other believers.
      - Besides that, you will glorify God not only as a saviour of life unto life, but also as a saviour of death unto death.
      - Did God not send prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah with the express purpose of hardening the hearts of their hearers so that His judgment would be clear?
        - Our Lord Jesus did the same thing.
        - Do not be ashamed of the gospel. God is glorified by obeying it and making it known.

TRANS> Moving on in our text, we are last of all told what faith does for us.

#### V. Faith inherits righteousness.

- Our text says that "Noah become an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith."



- A. What a great blessing it is to inherit righteousness.
1. Noah was a sinner.
    - If God had not promised to save the world through the coming seed of the woman, there would have been no injustice in condemning him too.
    - But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
  2. Righteousness speaks of a right standing with God.
    - By trusting God to make him righteous, Noah was made righteous.
    - Being righteous means that though he was as sinner, there was no condemnation for him. It was as if he had never sinned and had always pleased God.
    - By faith he was accounted to be righteous in God's sight so that all the excellent blessings that God naturally bestows on a righteous man were given to him.
      - He was blessed to have communion with God forever.
      - He was blessed to live in God's house and behold His glory as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
      - He was blessed to be provided for by God in every way that would bring happiness to him.
      - He was given the ability to know God and to enjoy Him, and to live for His glory forever and ever.
      - He was given complete security in his relationship with God—unlike Adam who was for a time on probation and was rejected because of his sin.
- B. And to top all of this off, his righteousness was given to him as an inheritance.
1. An inheritance is not something you earn. It is given to you freely.
    - You don't have to pay for it or work for it.
    - It is simply bestowed.
  2. Such is righteousness by faith.
    - It is given to us even though we were cut off by our sin and disqualified.
    - God sent His only Son to be the one who gained acceptance with God as a man by His godly life. He opened the kingdom of righteousness by His righteousness.
    - But lest He should be the only member of that kingdom, the Father also appointed that He should die in the place of those He came to redeem.
      - We have seen in Hebrews that He is a priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice to take away our sins.
    - Not only that, but He also gives us the Holy Spirit so that we will repent and believe, and, when we come to God at last, be perfected in holiness.
  3. This is all freely given to those who believe—who simply look upon God and His saving work through Christ to make them acceptable to God.

- It is not out of reach for anyone because it is not based on your doing.
- You simply come to God and ask Him to restore you through Christ and He does it. It is not based on your work. It is based on trusting God.
  - Works will follow because He will transform you by His grace.
  - It would be of no account if faith did not transform us—but the righteousness itself is an inheritance, freely bestowed on sinners who would otherwise be condemned.

**Conclusion:** Be sure that you understand that none of these benefits that come from faith are out of reach for you.

- Yes, Noah was an extraordinary man, having faith in a time when the whole world had rejected God, but the blessing of righteousness that he inherited was due to his faith in God—that he looked away from himself to God.
- That is something that is as accessible to you as it was to Noah. It is yours by faith. It is your own fault if you reject it.