

# Noah's Faith - Its Basis, Tenor, Activity and Outcome

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[ 0 : 00 ] So the quality of his faith, the strength of his faith, the obedience of his faith, all of that actually helps. The background to that being so dark helps to see the luster, the quality of his faith shining through.

And that's what we would like ourselves, isn't it, to be, as we're known as a people of faith, how we act and how we interact with each other, how we deal with the current situation in the world, and that our faith too would shine through and that people would acknowledge that we are not just a people of faith, but a people of faith in the sense in which that brightness of God's glory would shine through the life that we live.

So four things I want to mention briefly about this faith of Noah and especially how he came to exercise it. First of all, we can call the basis of his faith was the word of God.

Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark. So the basis of his faith or what he actually rested his faith on, of course, was God ultimately.

But the word of God that he received was by way of a warning. And we know that the word of God contains warnings as well as wonderful passages of promise and comfort and assurance.

[ 1 : 28 ] And we need them both. Faith requires both. Faith doesn't just proceed or get strengthened from things which are comforting all the time.

Faith is, if you like, almost a living organism that reacts to the various circumstances around it. And so the believer, whatever circumstances they're in, their faith will work in relation to what God has revealed in his word or in his providence, such as we are actually experiencing at the moment.

And so he, here is God saying to him, this is going to happen. Faith, his faith actually accepted that. And these things were as yet unseen.

They had not yet happened. And yet Noah believed them as surely as if they had already happened. And we live in a world which is very much in that way, set in a world that is contrary to God, anti-God.

And in many ways you can relate the likes of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount to that kind of world as well. It's not just a way back in Noah's day.

[ 2 : 44 ] It's there in Christ's day, in the Apostles' day, and right up through to our own day. So the likes of the Sermon on the Mount is actually a counter-cultural document, if you like, as a section within Matthew.

So they're trying to set that into the pattern of our lives will mean that we're living against the values of the world, the values of our current world as well.

So faith rests upon or has its basis in the word of God. It goes by what God has revealed of himself. And on whatever topic God has revealed himself, that is what faith actually comes to accept and comes to build upon.

The second issue in his faith or regarding his faith, as mentioned, we can call the tenor of his faith. You could say it's something to do with the quality of his faith, but it certainly belongs to the substance of his faith or the tenor of his faith.

And it's in these words, moved with reverent fear. Being warned about things not yet as seen, in reverent fear constructed an ark.

[ 3 : 52 ] And the word that's used there, translated there as reverent fear, means exactly that. Noah was not terrified. I'm not sure he wouldn't have had a touch of fear.

We all have a touch of fear. And Ali mentioned in his prayer, the judgment of God. And I doubt if any of us can really reckon with the judgment of God, the tremendous greatness and grandeur of God in his judgment, without having some sort of tremor of normal fear.

But that's not the kind of thing that's actually mentioned here. It's reverent fear. It's really what the Bible elsewhere calls the fear of God. And the fear of God is not being afraid of God.

It's not actually having a terror of God. The fear of God, as we often say, is living in awe and respect and love for God.

The person that fears God the most is the person who loves God the most. The person who loves God the most is the person who will have most of the fear of God about him.

[ 4 : 58 ] That respect, that awe, that reverence, that love. And that's where, again, relating to God's word, faith actually shows itself in reverent fear.

Whatever the word of God says to us, in reverent fear, as we receive that in the fear of God, it comes back to God by way of faith's respect and faith's love, or love along with faith, however you want to put it.

That's the kind of thing that's here. And if you go to the likes of the book of Proverbs, which, of course, has a lot to do with the fear of God, it's mentioned there so many times, you could take from the likes of Proverbs that the fear of God is actually a foundational thing to the Christian life.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. More than once, that's mentioned in the book of Proverbs. And you could say the beginning really means the first principle of wisdom or the foundational principle of wisdom.

The fear of God is the beginning, the first principle of wisdom. The wise life, the life that gives that respect to God and to his law and to his gospel, to his promises, that is the fear of God.

[ 6 : 18 ] And faith, rather, gives us that boldness that belongs to the fear of God. We mustn't imagine that living in a godly fear or by godly fear, by the fear of God makes a person timid, makes a person soft.

It's actually the other way about. The person that has most of the fear of God about them, and you can see that in the Bible as well from the likes of Noah himself, or take, for example, Moses or Elijah or any of the apostles, and you can see that it didn't make them soft.

It made them very bold. It gave them a firmness in their convictions, and so it will for us as well. If we live in the fear of God, it's not presumptuousness.

It's not carelessness. It's just utter respect for God. It translates itself into the fear of God living by faith. So the basis of his faith, he rested on God's word, the tenor of his faith, the godly fear that he showed, and then the activity of his faith, he built an ark.

Faith always results in action. The whole tenor of this chapter is about action, actions that actually have faith behind or as a basis for them.

[ 7 : 42 ] The actions of Noah were he built an ark, he constructed an ark. And the whole of Hebrews, you might say, is an argument in favor of faith issuing itself or showing itself in work.

Because the writer to the Hebrews was dealing with the idea that it would actually be somewhat better to go back to the Old Testament kind of situation where you had a high priest that you could see, that you could talk to physically, where you had a system of sacrifices that were visible, where you had things to do with the worship of God in the sanctuary or in the temple, where there were very visible things that represented God and so on.

And Hebrews is actually saying to us, we have a better, a better thing in the Old Testament, in the New Testament situation we have than they had there.

Because we have a better high priest in Jesus. We have a better tabernacle or temple in himself and in heaven. We have a better inheritance than the land of Canaan.

We have heaven itself that Canaan pointed forward to. And faith, as it relates to God's word, always takes action of some kind.

[ 9 : 04 ] You remember James, we studied James some time ago during the Bible study weeks. And one of the things James emphasizes is that faith without works is dead.

Faith that says, I believe, but doesn't really show itself in any works that honor God, that faith, James is saying, is actually not really faith at all.

It's dead. And faith shows itself in actions. And whatever actions are proper to this situation we are in as Christians, that's what faith actually sets in motion.

I'm not saying that people without believing faith in Christ don't do good things at times like these. Of course they do. But we are doing it for God's sake.

We're doing it for his glory. We're doing it for his honor. Whatever it is we do in favor of helping other people at such a time as this. And of course, Noah's contemporaries would have seen his outlook as absolutely crazy.

[ 10 : 08 ] Miles and miles and miles from the nearest sea. And this man's building a huge boat. And he's building a huge boat because his God told him something about a coming flood, which to the natural man's reason is a ludicrous suggestion.

And how many times do you come across in your own Christian experience, people who will suggest to you that what you believe in is simply without foundation. And it's just completely unreasonable.

Well, it is to a mind that has no faith in God. Nothing appears reasonable except what that mind itself sees as reasonable. The beauty of faith, though, is, as the beginning of chapter 11 actually shows us, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Unbelieving reason says, I need to see something before I believe in it. I need to be able to actually touch it or see it or have it verified by some way or other. Otherwise, I'm not going to believe it.

But then you can see again how that argument is destroyed by this argument in favor of faith. Because verse 3 says, by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God.

[ 11 : 31 ] The word that Noah came to trust in. The word that faith always comes to trust in and to rest in. And it's interesting that that's how verse 3 puts it. Because unbelieving reason will say, by understanding we come to believe.

Whereas this is saying, by faith we come to understand. By faith in God, we begin to understand how the universe operates. Why we're actually the way we are as sinful human beings.

And why we've got such a situation, as you find frequently in history, that people have crisis to contend with that's bigger than themselves. That's all to do with the fact that God presides over things in his government, as was already mentioned in prayer.

And I'm not going to get carried away there on a tangent. I could feel one actually just coming up. So let's keep to the theme that we planned. So he built an ark. And however stupid that may have seemed, and did seem, I'm sure, to many of his contemporaries, Noah took God's word at face value.

And the one thing the devil will always try and get you and me to do is to just take a wee step aside from the truthfulness of God's word, the veracity of God, the trustworthiness of God in his word.

[ 12 : 54 ] He will always want you to say, well, yeah, okay, I believe that, but I'm just going to step aside and take this wee bypass for a moment and just trust my own reason or just take in what unbelieving signs or whatever will say for this moment.

And that's what I'll hold back. That's not at all the way of faith, of course, and that's what the devil will try and take you into, these sort of bypasses. So in times like these, it's absolutely vital, as at all times, that we should hold on to the truth of God's word and that we should actually have that always as the basis on which we proceed.

And having come to believe in God, then we actually, like so many times in the scripture, people of God had called to do certain things, came before God and said, Lord, here am I.

What will you have me to do? What must I do for you? How can I serve you in my present context? So the basis of faith, the word of God, the tenor of his faith, godly fear, the activity of his faith, he built an ark, and you've got the outcome of his faith as well, by which he condemned the world.

Well, first of all, for the saving of his household, by this he condemned the world and became the heir, an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

[ 14 : 20 ] That's very interesting that the writer here says that through faith, Noah actually condemned the world. You might say, well, only God can condemn the world, surely.

Well, yes, in the ultimate sense, but there's a sense in which your faith and my, or your life of faith, my life of faith, itself condemns the world as they see it, because for one thing, it certainly gets to the world's conscience.

And if it didn't get to the world's conscience, you wouldn't have the kind of reactions that you often have to the Christian message. It leaves a mark in people's lives. It leaves a mark in that little microcosm that's in their hearts, just as Noah's did in the world of his day.

And as the judgment of God came, and as the word of God was proved true, you could say from that too that Noah's faith condemned the world.

His acceptance of God's word was itself, in a sense, a condemnatory element towards the way the world looked at things in a very different way.

[ 15 : 31 ] But not only that, he saved his own household, and that follows through, actually right through to the final judgment. This two-fold matter in God's government, because you always have together salvation for God's people and condemnation for the unsaved.

And it's all the way through. You have it in Matthew 25, the sheep and the goats, as a figure of anticipating Christ's final judgment. You have it in the book of Revelation.

All the way through there, the Lord's people are saved. They are brought into the final temple of heaven. They are brought into that final place of peace and rest.

They're saved. And against that, you have sadly the condemnation, the destructive judgment of God against the ungodly.

And that's an element that you find mentioned there in what happened in Noah's day as well. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

[ 16 : 39 ] And that really fits in with a lot of Paul's writings too. Righteousness that comes by faith. Righteousness being the standard that matches God's own standard or God's own being, you see, in terms of his righteousness, his perfect uprightness.

And the righteousness that we have by faith is actually the righteousness of Christ. The one that he has created for us through his death and resurrection.

And that becomes ours as we receive him. And how do we receive him? We receive him by faith. When you receive Christ by faith and you receive that righteousness that he died to achieve for us, then like Noah through faith, we become an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

But the fact that he uses the word heir points forward to something beyond faith itself, to that which faith looks forward to and hope looks forward to, which is, of course, the inheritance of heaven itself.

And that's where the text actually ends. He became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. But the end result of that will be that God's people will share together that righteousness in glory with Christ.

[ 18 : 07 ] And that too is such an important feature to keep before our faith in critical times like these. As the chapter goes on to say, these people who lived by faith, well, they all died in faith, not having received the things promised in this life.

But they saw them afar off and they greeted them. They welcomed them from afar and they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. And God's reminding us through this terrible virus that's come upon the whole earth, He's reminding us as Christians just to actually reinforce the point for us that we are strangers and exiles in this world.

And we don't live for this world though we want to live for Christ in it. And what they're saying is people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

They desire a better country that is a heavenly one that for God is not ashamed to be called their God but He has prepared for them a city.

And so we, by faith, exercise patience and foresight as we look forward to that better country, a better world than this one will ever be even without its viruses.

[ 19 : 32 ] And so let's continue to believe and trust in God, resting on God's word and seeking to live a godly life in godly fear and seeking as much as possible to show our faith, to exercise our faith in works, in things which will benefit others along with ourselves.

and always realizing that the outcome of our faith is not confined to this world, that it is ultimately in the world to come, in this better country, which is absolutely secure, where no virus enters, where nothing destructive will ever touch the lives of those who enter it.

and where we, as we anticipate that, can also say that God is not ashamed to be called our God, for he has prepared this for us.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks for the security you give to your people and for the way that this in your word is reinforced by assuring them that you have prepared a place for them already.

And let us, their faith and hope, anticipate coming to be with you in that better country. So, Lord, you remind us that we are strangers and pilgrims and aliens in this world.

[ 20 : 59 ] Lord, bless us, we pray, as your people and all your people throughout the world. Help us to continue to live by faith, to show our faith, to show the reality of faith and how indispensable faith in Christ is at all times.

We ask again that you bless us and keep us and that you would make us thankful, O Lord, for all the positive things that we do come to take note of and to enjoy even at this time of crisis.

We commend to you all that has been prayed for already tonight and ask that you would take us on throughout the rest of this week now, receiving our thanks, hearing us, Lord, and blessing our study of your word for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, we're going to finish with a singing, singing of Psalm number 9, 9a, in the Sing Psalms version. .

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[ 22:12 ] .