

(Devotional #13) **Character Studies from Hebrews 11:1-40**
Heroes of the Faith: (The Transition) Noah
(Genesis 5:28-29, 32; 6:13–9:29; Hebrews 11:7)

Lamech lived one-hundred and sixty-nine years, and he became the father of a son, and he called his name NOAH, saying, 'This one shall give us REST¹ from our work and from the toil of our hands, with regard to the ground which the LORD has cursed' – Genesis 5:28-29

These are the generations of Noah – Noah was a justified man, perfect in his lineage. Noah walked with God – Genesis 6:9-10

In this lesson, we are going to consider Noah, a transitional character in the Book of Genesis. Noah is *transitional* because he lived before, during, and after the great flood. Last week we looked at the lives of two brothers: **CAIN and ABEL**. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 – that the human race would be divided between '**SEED OF THE SERPENT**' (**UNBELIEVERS WHO REJECT JESUS CHRIST AND HIS REDEEMING WORK ON THE CROSS**), and '**SEED OF THE WOMAN**' (**BELIEVERS WHO ARE SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS**), began to be fulfilled in Cain and Abel. Through them, sin moved from the individual to society, and the inevitable division of the human race was set in motion.

A Christian's first call is to step out of the line of Cain, into the line of Abel on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "**For in Adam, all die, but in Christ, all are made alive².**" In other words, the Fall of Adam (**OUR FEDERAL HEAD**) resulted in death being passed to all of Adam's descendants. But by faith in Christ, God moves believers out of the cursed line of Adam (**AND BY EXTENSION, THE LINE OF CAIN**), and adds us to the elect line of Abel through faith in Christ. Then Scripture tells us to keep on trusting Him through faith in His Word.

This is why in Genesis 6:9, Noah is said to be "**a righteous man, blameless in his time.**" (NASB). Now I don't think this is the best possible translation of this verse. A better translation would be: "**Noah was a JUSTIFIED MAN, PERFECT in his LINEAGE³.**" There is not time to unpack all this verse means, so for our purposes it means, '*Noah was a believer, justified by faith, and his lineage ('GENERATIONS' IN THE KJV) had not been compromised by the Angelic infiltration⁴.*

So, Noah and his family represented the remnants of a pure human race as created by God (**Genesis 6:5-12**). His lineage could be traced to Adam without interruption, and he was justified

¹ The Hebrew name, 'Noah,' means, 'Rest.'

² See also Romans 5:19

³ Noah's lineage could be traced directly to Adam without compromise by the angelic infiltration of Genesis 6:1-8.

⁴ Genesis 6:1-8 is a hard passage to interpret. The issue is the identification of a Hebrew phrase (Genesis 6:2, 4) translated '**Sons of God.**' Some have said these are godly descendants of Abel, others have identified them as 'evil despots.' However, the Hebrew phrase **b^ene-ha-^elohim** ('**Sons of God**'), always refers in Scripture to angels (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). I believe this is the correct interpretation of this phrase. This was a time, when angels "**left their first estate**" (cf. Jude 6-7; see also 2 Peter 2:4) and co-habited with human females, in an effort to stifle God's promise of a Savior. The Messiah, promised to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, had to come into human history through 'Seed of the Woman,' and in order to represent the human race before God, He would have to be a pure human being, not the offspring of the union of angels and human beings – [Jesus is '**fully God and fully man, united forever in one person**' – The Council of Chalcedon ... 451 A.D.]. For a more complete treatment of the Angelic Conflict, see the Four-part Series, 'The Angelic Conflict' at <https://www.gracebiblechurch.org/adult-bible-classes/lessons/foundations/angelology/>.

before God by faith in the Word of God. If Satan could pollute Noah's lineage, as he had the lineage of most or all of the human race, then the Messiah could not have come into the world. This was the reason for the flood – to preserve the human race and continue the line of Adam through Noah until the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah-Savior promised in Genesis 3:15.

Now we need to take this seriously because Jesus drew a connection between the time of Noah and the events that were taking place then, and what we can expect in the time preceding the Second Advent of Jesus. In Luke 18:8, Jesus asks a question: *“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”* In other words, at the end of the Great Tribulation, when the Messiah comes to establish His Kingdom, will conditions be as they were in the time of Noah, when the only righteous man left was Noah? Apparently, the answer is, *‘YES.’* Listen to Jesus' words in Luke 17:26: *“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man”* – (Cf. Luke 17:20-37).

Verse 7 is the single verse in Hebrews 11 dedicated to Noah; it says:

By faith Noah, being warned 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.

The text tells us, *‘Noah was warned.’* One of the problems human beings have with regard to obedience is not that God does not warn us of the consequences of evil, but that we do not heed the warning. Noah *did* heed the warning.; the rest of humanity did not.

Now *faith* comes into play here *‘because of things not seen.’* Remember how Chapter 11 began: *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* – (Hebrews 11:1). In Noah's case, the thing not seen was the flood – or perhaps even rain! According to Genesis 2:5-6, hydration of the earth took place by means of a mist that would rise up from the ground to water the plants. In fairness, the most we can take from these two verses is that in the early stages of creation, up until that time, God had not brought rain upon the earth. This does not necessarily mean it did not rain until the flood, but it is a distinct possibility. We do know there was a vapor canopy over the earth (Genesis 1:6-7). One possible explanation for the extent of the flood, in addition to forty-days of intense rain, is God may have released the water in the vapor canopy, and also caused the waters beneath the surface of the earth to inundate the ground, so the entire earth was covered by the flood. In any case, Noah had not seen anything that could bring about the flood. But even without observable evidence, as a man of faith, Noah believed God and he acted on that belief, such that by believing the Lord, Noah demonstrated his faith in the veracity of God's Word ... and he became one of the men of old, who gained approval with God, based on faith-alone.

Some would say Noah's faith was irrational. He built *an ark* scores of miles from the nearest ocean; it was many times larger than was necessary for his small family; then of all things, Noah filled it with animals. In all of human history, there never had been a flood! And as mentioned above, it may never have rained! Did Noah even know what *an ark* was? Probably not. Very likely, God had to explain to Noah how a boat works. Yet Noah, because he believed God's Word, built something that was completely outside of his experience, having only the Word of God as the basis for his actions. One of the greatest acts of faith in the history of the world occurred when Noah chopped down the first tree. Noah demonstrated his faith by his obedience.

For 120-years Noah worked on the ark somewhere in the middle of landlocked Mesopotamia. He endured ridicule as he labored solely on the basis of God's Promise that judgment was coming.

What God told Noah staggers the imagination. But Noah believed it, and the weight of God's message gripped his heart and he obeyed. He had no encouragement from his neighbors, just a divine warning and the mockery of the surrounding culture. This is what faith looks like in the midst of an unbelieving culture.

So, it is no wonder the story of Noah is a story both of *salvation* and *condemnation*. By faith Noah obeyed God, and by faith he gained the salvation of his household; but this act of faith also brought condemnation on the world.

SALVATION: As with Abel in Hebrews 11:4, and as we will see next week with Abraham in Genesis 15:6⁵, faith is related to a propositional revelation from God. Noah could not yet see the flood, but he had the promise from God that it would come, and on the basis of that promise, like Abraham, Noah believed the LORD and Righteousness was credited to him.

The only way any man can be said to be '***righteous***,' is if righteousness is imputed to him by God on the basis of (***in the case of Noah***) the future death of Jesus on the cross. The content of faith, as we will see in our journey through Hebrews 11, changes over time; *i.e.*, God always asks men to believe His Word, but because God's revelation is progressive, the content of God's Word is revealed over the course of human history – over time – progressively. Now in every case – without exception – ***the basis on which God is able to act graciously toward us, is the cross***. Whether that event is past or future (***depending on the age in which a man lived or lives***) the cross is the judicial basis for mercy and grace. ***In the Bible, GRACE, MERCY, and COMPASSION ALWAYS FOLLOW AFTER JUSTICE***. The only reason God is able to act toward us in Grace is because He first acted Judicially toward Jesus at the cross.

CONDEMNATION: Now it is a fact that God will judge sin; there is no way around it. But the '*good news*' for us is, God judged Jesus, who Himself was without sin, but who took our sins on Himself, so that God can offer salvation to men on the basis of the cross, and not on the basis of good works done by men⁶. But if a man chooses not to accept God's free gift of forgiveness based on the cross, then God will judge the man. And this is the other propositional revelation God made that is cited in Hebrews 11:7: "***by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith***." How did Noah's faith condemn the world? It did so because for the 120-years Noah labored building the ark, all the people saw and heard him. With every chop of the ax, every clank of the lumber, with the sharp rap of the hammer on a spike, and the ever-present smell of the pitch, with every one of these things, *the people were 'seeing and hearing' a sermon*. Better yet, they saw in clear, visible form what true faith looks like.

Noah acted in faith on *what he did not see but believed*, while the people refused to act in faith on *what they could see*, *viz.*, *Noah building the ark*. By the outward display of his faith⁷, Noah condemned these unbelievers, who did not trust the Word of God. Abel's offering, and the construction of the ark by Noah, were instances of ***faith made visible***. The ark was the physical embodiment of Noah's faith. When the people looked at the ark under construction, it itself was a testimony to the faith of Noah. Every disrespectful criticism of Noah by his neighbors, won

⁵ See also, Romans 4:3

⁶ See Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁷ Cf. James 2:14-26. James is not opposing Paul by saying, "You see, a man is *justified by works and not by faith alone*" – (James 2:24). Rather, he is making the point that true faith is evidenced by the good works it bears. We are saved by Grace through Faith-alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) but we are created to do good works – *not as 'the cause' of our salvation – but 'because of it'* (Ephesians 2:10).

respect for Noah before God, and heaped coals of condemnation on the heads of the unbelievers. ***It was by this, Noah's outworking of his faith in a context of ridicule by the people, that made Noah "an heir of righteousness which is according to faith."***

Noah is an example to us of how to live out our faith in a corrupt society. It may not be necessary, or in some cases even appropriate, to stand on a soap box and preach to a crowd on a street corner. But what always is appropriate is to live consistently in obedience to God's revealed Word.

When you and I live by faith, particularly in times of confusion and chaos, we demonstrate to the world that there is another dimension to life. Our faith is a testimony that the invisible, Spiritual Kingdom of God is more valuable than what we see, hear, taste, smell, or touch. What God says matters. He is alive and He has a rightful claim on our lives. Some, who hear His Word, respond in faith, but too many see and hear the same truth but reject the message, and by extension, they reject the Savior.

Noah preached by his actions. Speak of the Lord and His Attributes when the opportunity arises ... explain the Gospel when God opens the door for you to do so ... but ***NEVER*** adopt as your own the worldview of a culture that opposes the revealed Word of God.

We are living in a chaotic time in our country – perhaps a time like you have never seen before – As the pandemic and the unrest continue, two questions come to mind: *“What are the Biblical principles that relate to this time and place? And how do I apply them to my life?”*

While this is not a complete list, consider these:

- God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind – ***2 Timothy 1:7***
- God set the number of my days on the earth before I was born – ***Psalms 139:16***
- God is our refuge and fortress, who promises deliverance and protection – ***Psalms 91***
- God gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding – ***Proverbs 2:6***
- God instructs us to be alert, to stand firm in the faith, to act like men, to be strong, and to let all we do be done in love – ***1 Corinthians 16:13***

God has spoken, so how do we, who claim to be his people, live by faith during this time in our history? There may not be a better Biblical example than Noah for living in Twentieth Century America (***second, of course, to Christ Himself***). Virtually everything promoted by our culture as *‘politically correct’* ... is wrong. As such, our world looks very much like the world of Noah. So, remember Noah; he stood out from the crowd, and he stood for what was right. In a world characterized by wickedness, ***“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”*** – (***Genesis 6:8***). He is an example of how we should live in a world influenced so heavily by ***‘THE SEED OF THE SERPENT.’***