

Noah

Like Enoch, he 'walked with God' (*Genesis 6.9*). Noah, who is also known as a 'herald of righteousness' (*2 Peter 2.5*), lived a blameless life.

He was different. Around him there was great wickedness. 'Every intention of the thoughts of' each person's 'heart was only evil continually' (*Genesis 6.5*). By contrast Noah was a man of faith. The comparison is stark.

The word *faith* is found twice in Hebrews 11.7 - once at the beginning and once at the end of the verse. The author is keen to impress upon us three facts. As he walked with God, Noah loved God, lived for God, and looked to God.

In what ways did Noah's faith show itself?

Listen

First, it is clear he did not do what most do. He did the opposite. *When God spoke he listened*. Hearing precedes heeding. He was ready to hear what God said. In particular,

Noah listened to what God revealed to him about 'events unseen' (*Hebrews 11.7*). The news given was not good. It concerned coming judgment.

Some only want to hear good news. They find bad news depressing. Not so Noah. The bad news he heard spurred him into action. Such was the response of one willing to listen.

His listening was an act of self-denial. Mankind by nature is turned in on himself. We prefer to focus on and pursue our own desires and interests. Or, to use an everyday term, we like to do our own thing. Jesus, when he walked on earth, taught his followers to deny themselves. In the days of Moses and Joshua believers were taught to do the same.

Noah turned to God and trusted God. Having heeded God's call to walk with him, he went where God led him. He put himself in the way of blessing. And he did so with open ears and a willing heart.

Reverent

Secondly, Noah responded in a right way. *He showed a proper respect for God*. Again, in doing this, he differed from the people of his generation. They scoffed, 'following their own sinful desires' (*2 Peter 3.3*). Noah proceeded with caution and care, as the word

translated 'reverent fear' indicates. His concern was to act wisely and rightly at all times.

Noah is as an example. Every believer seeks to emulate His behaviour. Reverent or godly fear is a mark of true conversion. All born again by the Spirit of God, being aware of his holiness and power, bow down in his presence. God's person, power and word fill them with amazement and awe.

Obedience

Thirdly, Noah obeyed God. He constructed an ark. His work was not shoddy. Rather the word 'construct' conveys the idea of proceeding with care. Noah made careful preparation. He worked diligently following the instructions given down to the last detail.

Noah was given a long-term project. Some estimate it may have taken some 120 years. The size of the boat, and the amount of wood required for it, demand we conclude it took years, although no precise period is given. Noah did not have the machines and tools we have today. His task demanded time and effort. Having chosen the site upon which the ark was to be built, Noah then had to get the gopher wood needed. And having got that, he then had to cut it, prepare it and use it.

Faith

The Bible references to Noah emphasise his faith. It is a faith for which he is commended; a faith for which he is remembered.

Noah's faith was a *persevering* faith. He kept going in the face of opposition. He maintained his trust in God. He was loyal to God over many years. During those years he would have been ridiculed. Those intent on evil would have mocked and scoffed. Yet he did not give up.

Noah's faith was a *proclaiming* faith. He was, we are told, a herald of righteousness. In other words he spoke to others - even the mockery and scoffers - about God.

Judgment

One element of his message was *judgment*. His task was to warn people it was coming. It was to tell them, by word and deed, the form it would take. There would be a flood. The flood would be so great and so extensive that all, except those in the ark, would die. As the writer of Hebrews says, through his ministry the world was 'condemned' (*Hebrews 11.7*).

Hope

Another element of his message was *hope*. Noah 'found favour in the eyes of the LORD' (*Genesis 6.8*). He was called to

preach the righteousness of God. As he taught about God being just and fair he also proclaimed God's love. Noah knew God will punish the impenitent. He also knew God shows favour to those who embrace by faith the God-given way for sinners to escape his wrath.

Noah knew he deserved to die. He also knew the promise of a Saviour. He believed that in the fullness of time the Saviour would come. Many years later he came. Jesus Christ is his name. We know he is the promised one because in him alone all the predictions about the Messiah or Saviour are fulfilled.

Justice

One aspect of the Saviour's work was to satisfy the justice of God. Christ Jesus endured the death sinners deserve. He took their place. All who accept he did this and put their trust in him live. They are made alive in Christ and enjoy his righteousness credited to their account. They are, like Noah, made heirs 'of the righteousness that is by faith' (*Hebrews 11.7*).

Noah called people to turn to God. He told them of the favour God shows to those who believe. Tragically believed his message. The people ignored the word of warning and rejected the message of hope. They spurned the love, patience and forbearance of God. They did so over many years, all the time it took Noah to build the ark.

Folly

What was the consequence of their folly? They perished. They had no reason to blame Noah for not warning them. Nor did they have cause to blame God. He had given a messenger who heard and heeded the word of God. Noah preached God's righteousness. He did so with his mouth. And he did so by his deed. He built an ark. Each person was individually responsible for rejecting the warning given.

Fruit

Noah's faith may also be described as a *practical* faith. It was, as we have seen, a faith that issued in works. It was not barren or fruitless. Rather it was productive. As he walked with God, thinking about what God had revealed, he faithfully did his duty. In so doing Noah is as an example. He illustrates those who trust God also obey God. 'Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead' (*James 2.17*). Faith and obedience go together.

Care

There is another lesson to be learned from God's dealings with Noah. The apostle Peter reminds us God cared for him. Though the ancient world was not spared when the earth was flooded, Noah was. In fact along with seven members of his family he was preserved (*see 2 Peter 2.5*) from the devastating effects of the destructive flood.

The flood was in the 600th year of Noah's life (*Genesis 7.6*). The ark was the God appointed means for 'saving his household' (*Hebrews 11.7*). Noah knew it would be. He believed God's word about the flood and he believed the promise of deliverance as soon as they were given. At that point these events were unseen (*Hebrews 11.7*).

However at the time appointed by God - the seventeenth day of the second month in Noah's six hundredth year (*Genesis 7.11*) - the heavens were opened and the rivers and seas burst forth. The rains fell for forty days. And the ark, into which Noah and his family went at the command of God, floated on the waters high above the earth (*Genesis 7.16f*). He and his family were kept safe. The Lord, who shut them in the ark, looked after them within it for a year (*Genesis 8.13f*).

It was at God's command that they left the ark. Then Noah built an altar. He expressed his gratitude to God, offering a sacrifice of praise (*Genesis 8.20f*) for the way he and his family were preserved.

Rest

God's plans for his people are good. He makes them heirs. He has in store for them a great inheritance. On the last day they shall dwell with him in the new heavens and new earth he will bring into

being. There they shall enjoy eternal rest.

The name Noah has been understood to mean either comfort, rest or quiet, or alternatively long-lived. Clearly he enjoyed a long life. It is also true that over many years he experienced peace with God and the peace of God.

In a generation known for its great wickedness Noah found comfort and rest. He found it in God. Such God gives to all who have faith. They are those who listen to God, have a reverent fear of him, and willingly obey his word.

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