

## Hebrews 11:7 “Noah’s Faith” by John Grimm

### Intro

We’re all suckers for a good story. Kids love a bedtime story, mystery novels will never go out of style, and it seems like watching movies has never been so popular. Marvel has made a fortune off the Avengers series, and Avengers Endgame just recently took the world by storm. It’s reached 2.75 billion dollars in the box office. Everybody loves a good story. If you grew up in the church, you were probably taught some of the popular stories in the Bible. Included in the list of popular stories in the Bible is the story of Noah and the ark. You might be thinking, yeah I know, Noah built an ark, the animals came, and God sent a flood. Yep that’s pretty much it, thanks for being here this morning....

Just kidding, it is true that Noah built the ark. The animals did come, and God did send a worldwide flood. But that is not the entire story.

In this chapter of Hebrews, we’ll be examining the faith of many who have gone before us. This morning we’ll learn about the faith of Noah. We talk a lot about faith at church, but I wonder if we have a firm grasp on what it is. If someone asked you what faith is, what would you say? The writer of Hebrews calls it this, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

### A Model Faith

Noah certainly had faith. He had an assurance of things hoped for and a conviction of things not seen. Let’s look at the story of Noah.

Gen 6:5-8, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

Noah found favor with God even though the rest of the world was living in evil continually. We think things in the world are getting bad now. It’s not even close to what it was like then. All that people were doing was evil. And then there was Noah, who God recognized as righteous. Our verse in Hebrews begins, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” Why in the world would Noah build an ark? We know that he’s not even close to the sea, a global flood had never happened, and if he was gonna do this then he’d be the only one in on it. He and his family, that’s it. According to popular opinion, Noah was wrong. According to the evidence of nature that he knew of, Noah was wrong. Why would you build an ark? For us looking back it doesn’t seem crazy because we know the story, but back then it must’ve seemed like the dumbest thing he could do. Noah built the ark, because he believed God’s Word. Remember, “By faith Noah, *being warned* by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.”

God said what was going to happen, and Noah had faith that God's Word was true. By this time, the world is about 1,500 years old. It hasn't flooded yet, what kind of sense would it make for it to flood now? There's no evidence that the world is gonna flood! Noah's faith seemed radical! Noah's faith was not in evidence. You see evidence. Faith isn't required to believe in evidence. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things *not seen*. Noah could not see the flood that would come many years later. He could not see how the ark would save him and his family, but he believed God's Word. In the same way, we are called to faith in things we haven't seen yet rather than evidence. Evidence itself is not bad, though. There is a lot of great evidence for the existence of God and particularly not just any God, but the Christian God.

One of the things I like to do is watch philosophical, apologetic debates and arguments between people of different religions. I like watching Christians defend the faith against atheists, Muslims, Jews, everybody. I love watching those kinds of debates and discussions, it's interesting to me and the way some of these people know the Bible is just incredible. I want to know God's Word that way. I saw recently a video of William Lane Craig talking with Ben Shapiro. William Lane Craig is this brilliant Christian apologist, one of the smartest Christians defending the faith alive. Ben Shapiro is an Orthodox Jew who is also a brilliant man. He's in the political world if you haven't heard of him, and he's real sharp. They're talking about Jesus and particularly the resurrection. William Lane Craig is hitting him with facts, logic, evidence for the resurrection, just boom boom and I'm sitting there watching like yes, what do you have to say about that Ben? How could anyone not believe if all this stuff is true? All the facts and evidence point to Jesus being the Messiah! But Ben Shapiro ends the conversation about the resurrection by saying they should move on, because frankly he didn't find it interesting. What? Here is a sharp, respected man who just heard all the best, *true* evidence for Jesus being the Messiah and it doesn't interest him? What went wrong? Evidence alone is not sufficient for faith.

I want to clarify, evidence for Christianity is not a bad thing. It's a wonderful thing. God has given us evidence to encourage our faith. It makes sense that things in the world point to its creator and that we have historical evidence of Jesus. Like anything else, evidence can be used wrongly. If we live by evidence alone rather than by faith in the Word of God, we are missing the point. The foundation of our faith must be on God and His Word. The crazy thing is, Noah's faith was even greater than the faith required from us. Yeah, sounds a little weird but it's true. God called Noah to faith in something that had never happened before. Ever. Our faith is in something that we might not be able to see, but it has already happened! Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4). Our faith is in what Jesus has already done! We have good reason to place our faith in Jesus. And you might think, okay, but I haven't died yet, so how do I know if it's true that God really will deliver me from death? Well, Jesus has already died and resurrected. If Jesus rose from the grave after defeating sin then we can have confidence that God will raise those who have faith in Him too. Let us follow the example of Noah and have faith that God's Word is true and that He will deliver those who have faith in Him even if we do not see everything right now.

## **Faith and Works**

We've talked about Noah's faith and how it was in things he couldn't see yet. Now, I wanna talk about the results of his faith. Notice in the story that God didn't just give Noah the ark. He could have, but I wonder why he didn't...He gave him specific instructions in making it. God gave him the dimensions, how to make the roof, where to put the door (there was just one door), how many decks to have, how many of the animals to bring in. Noah might've thought, man this is gonna be a lot of work! I thought I just had to have faith that God would save me and then he would! What's up with this? Scholars believe it took Noah around 70 years to build the ark. Why did God give Noah all this stuff he had to do? It wasn't a small task to spend 70 or so years devoted to building this huge ark. I think God wanted to give Noah a chance to exercise his faith. I'm reminded of Paul telling the Philippians to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Paul wasn't teaching them to earn their salvation by being good enough. He was telling them to live like they have faith in Jesus. He's saying that their faith should have an impact on how they live. And they weren't just supposed to work out their salvation, but they were told to do it with fear and trembling. Why? Paul continues in verse 13, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

There should be a level of reverent fear we have with God. He is God. Sometimes it's easy to forget that since we don't see Him and can't comprehend His power. He ain't just the man upstairs. He is the living God who created you and has the power to blot you out of the world! Paul told the Philippians to live in reverence to God, and Noah acted in reverence to God too. "By faith Noah....in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household." But here's the thing, Noah's fear wasn't of the flood. He wasn't worried about the flood, because he was focused on God. He had a reverence for the One who could send the flood. I think often times people can have a thwarted view of God saving.

An easy way to evangelize is to show people that they deserve punishment for their sins which would be eternity in Hell. You don't want to go to Hell, do you? Well, just pray this prayer that you believe Jesus is your Savior and you're good! Doing something like that isn't necessarily wrong, yeah Jesus did die to pay for sins, but it's incomplete. Noah's desire was to obey God, kind of like a child wanting to obey his parents. Kids like getting their parents' approval and pleasure. When I was growing up, I wanted to get all A's in my classes. Every one. One of the main reasons I wanted to work hard was to please my parents. They would tell me that school was important and that I needed to do my best in my classes. I wanted to do well to make my parents proud. Our faith in God is that He would save us from our sins, but that faith should drive us to want to live for and please Him. Noah understood who God was and he wanted to please him. The verse right before this one talking about Noah in Hebrews says that it is impossible to please God apart from faith. Noah's faith led him to take action in reverent fear.

When we talk about works and faith, sometimes it can get a little confusing. I know we're talking about Noah building the ark and being saved, but Noah was not saved by his works. He was saved by his faith. By faith Noah built the ark. This relationship between works and faith was described by John Calvin: he said that faith alone saves, but saving faith is never alone. Faith that saves is never alone, if that faith is legit, your works will show it. If you have faith in Jesus, your life should reflect it. Noah's life reflected his faith in God! He built the ark! Imagine if

Noah never built the ark. He just said okay God, I have faith in you! But he never got busy building the ark....he would've died with the rest of them. Talk is cheap. James said, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). We are saved by faith alone, but that is not an excuse to live however you want. People understandably want to avoid a legalistic life where everything is about following rules. The word "religion" gets a bad wrap, because people associate it with legalism and rule following. So to avoid one wrong, it's natural for some to swing to the other end of the spectrum.....since they're saved by faith then what's the use in trying to live right? One of the things they teach you in driving school is to not over-correct if you realize you're drifting outside of the lines on the road. You want to turn back so you're where you need to be in the road, but it's so easy to accidentally over correct and turn too far over. It's dangerous to over-correct because you could hit another car or run into a ditch or something. Over-correcting can be fatal. We cannot over-correct in avoiding works-based legalism. We do need to turn away from it, but what sense does it make to go from one wrong to another and act like living for God is not important? Right in the center of that road is where we want to be, where we are saved by faith and our works reflect the faith we have. The two ought to be inseparable. And remember this: a faithful man is a busy man. Are you busy?

Assess for yourself, are you busy? I don't just mean busy in life, but busy living for God? Are you making disciples, are you honoring your parents, are you living sober, are you being patient with others, are you using words to encourage and uplift rather than tear down and destroy, we could go on and on and on listing things to do that would reflect faith. Let's not just talk the talk and say we have faith, let's walk the walk and live it out. How are you going to walk it out this week? A faithful man is a busy man. If you never get busy living for God, that faith is fake. Noah's faith was real, because he actually got to work. Let's get busy and get to work.

### **Faith Condemning the World**

Back to the story, it's said that Noah built the ark by faith and in reverent fear. Okay, we got that, now, let's look at the end of the verse we are examining this morning. "By this, he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

Noah condemned the world. By faith, Noah's actions condemned the world. That doesn't sound very good does it? Condemning usually has a negative connotation. It doesn't sound good. Anybody here want to be condemned? I didn't think so. When someone condemns, they are expressing disapproval and giving punishment. Noah himself wasn't going to punish the people, but he was expressing his disapproval. He's called a herald of righteousness in 2 Peter 2:5. A herald is someone who announces something. According to Jewish tradition, Noah did preach to the people telling them to turn from their evil ways or they would be destroyed. Those are definitely condemning words. The first thing I thought of when I was thinking about condemning people was seeing the hate preachers on college campuses. These guys would travel around to different college campuses and just straight up yell hateful words at people that I can't even repeat. Maybe you've seen people like this. Every time at least one person seems to step up and argue as the crowd gathers. I wonder if Noah got in any arguments with

people. Probably, and if so I'm sure Noah didn't condemn them with hateful words. He was disapproving of the way they were living, because it was about to earn them death. If someone is about to die, then the most loving thing to do would be to try to save them. But, honestly I don't think the writer's focus here in Hebrew's is on what Noah said.

It says by this, Noah condemned the world. By what? By building the ark. Noah's building the ark condemned the world. What's so condemning about that? Building the ark doesn't hurt anybody else. What was condemning is the message it sends. Noah was living in stark contrast to those around him. He had faith in God and obeyed His Word, the others were living however they wanted to. Jesus said this about the people, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-27).

These people were living completely different than Noah. Noah was a man on a mission. Build that ark so I can save my household. Everybody else was acting like they had nothing to worry about. They're enjoying themselves. Getting married, having fun at the cookout, going to high school sporting events. Oh, and there's Noah building the ark. Day in and day out, Noah's building this ark looking like the village idiot. He condemned the world by obeying God's Word not just for a little while but for the long run. And just like it is said of Enoch, Moses wrote in Genesis that Noah walked with God. Walking someplace takes time. The two people walking are close to each other. Allie and I will go on walks sometimes and we don't walk 5 yards apart. That would be weird. If you're gonna walk with someone you walk next to them. Walking with God was Noah's lifestyle.

For around 70 years Noah walked with God alone as he built the ark. Noah's faith had endurance. He was 600 when the flood came. That's a long time to walk with God. At best, he had his family walking with God as well. Every other person was living in opposition to the God Noah loved and lived for. Noah wasn't hateful in condemning the world, but he wasn't shy about it. He didn't worry about offending people by building his ark. Building this ark was sending the message to the rest of the world that Noah believed they would die. That's offensive. But you know what? So is the Gospel! The Gospel is offensive! You have to recognize yourself as a sinner to follow Jesus. John 3:17-18, says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

Anyone who does not believe in Jesus the Son of God is condemned already. They already deserve punishment. But, it also says that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it. That wasn't his mission. Every sinner is already condemned, Jesus wasn't worried about condemning them more. If Jesus wasn't sent to condemn the world, then it's not our mission either. The focus of a follower of Jesus should be, how can I point others toward God? Noah pointed others toward God by his faithful obedience. He walked with God. He built the ark. The ark was a physical representation of his faith in God. Who knows how many people saw him

working on it? In all that time of Noah being a light in a dark world, nobody else turned to faith in God. In what would be a lifetime of ministry for people today, not a single person came to faith in God as a result of his ministry. Was he a failure for that? No! Noah's job was to be different, to be obedient, and he was.

What about you? Are you willing to be different for God? It's not your job to stand on street corners with signs and preach hateful things at people condemning them. But if you have faith in God, then it is your job to provide others with an example of what it looks like to follow the God who can save. People should notice a difference in the way you live at work with coworkers or employees, at school, at home with your family. And if you are here this morning and you don't have faith in God at this point, I hope you can see a difference in the way Christians live. I hope you have a bunch of Noah's around you who are building their ark, obeying God and living for him. Not being hateful to other people who don't believe in God but being an example of what it means to actually have faith. God wants you have faith in Him.

### **Faith Inheriting Righteousness**

Now, let's look at how the verse ends. We're just in one verse in Hebrews today. Noah made the ark. "By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

Noah was an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. Two things to focus on here: Noah's inheritance and his righteousness by faith. We talked previously about Noah's righteousness. Here, the writer clearly shows what makes Noah righteous. What is it? What's the secret ingredient to being righteous? It's faith. Noah's righteousness was not from himself. The verse doesn't end by saying Noah became an heir of the righteousness that comes by being a good person. By being better than everyone else. Noah's righteousness comes by faith.

There are plenty of other places in the Bible which speak to this concept of righteousness by faith. I want to draw your attention to one. Paul wrote to the people in Corinth, "For our sake he (God) made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21)

On our own, no one here is righteous. What is righteous? Being righteous is being right, being justified. We aren't right, we're bad. You're probably even worse than you think you are! But hey, I'm right there with ya, because me and you both have sinned against God. There was only one man to ever go without sin and that's Jesus. He who had never sinned became sin, so we might become the very righteousness of God. Notice it doesn't say that we grow inside of us our own righteousness. Jesus didn't die on the cross so that our righteousness can increase. We can't rely on our own righteousness at all. The verse says that we might become the righteousness of God. We need His righteousness, just as Noah did. Noah became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Coincidentally, my brother Daniel and I were talking about inheritances the other day. Not our own, Mom and Dad, don't worry we're not scheming anything against you. I promise! Daniel was telling me about this report that came out listing the richest people in the world by age. If you look it up, from ages 21-33 almost all of the people's source of money is inheritance. This isn't just any inheritance. I'm talking billions of dollars in most cases. Can you imagine just being blessed with that much money? I wouldn't mind having that kind of inheritance. And the great thing is, when you're an heir, you receive something from someone else. It's not yours, but it becomes yours. You didn't have to do anything to earn it. Think about all the stuff you could do with billions of dollars. As great as inheriting billions of dollars would be, Noah's inheritance was way better. What good is all the money in the world if you get swept away in a flood and die? Noah's inheritance was much greater, because it offered him salvation.

### **Salvation**

Noah and his family were saved from the wrath of God. Let's finish the story. Noah finishes the ark, God tells him it's time to enter the ark. Noah gathers each of the animals set to enter and he goes in with his family. They enter the one door that God specifically said to make and God shut it. The flood began and continued for 40 days. "And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind." (Gen 7:21)

Three more times after that it's repeated that everything else died. Seriously, four times in a row it says that everything else died. Make no mistake about it, this was a worldwide flood. Every living creature is dead. Potentially millions of people drowned in this flood. Millions of people got what they deserved, while Noah and his family were on the ark. They remained on the ark for a year. Only those people on the ark were safe. The millions met their condemnation while at the same time the few met their salvation. Let's recap the story. God sees that mankind is living in evil and he decides to wipe them out, but he spares Noah. By faith, Noah obeys God's Word. He builds the ark, because his faith drives him to take action. He follows every single instruction God gives him. Noah did it all. He condemns the world by making the ark. Then God says it's time, and Noah and his family go into the ark through it's one door. The flood comes and Noah and his family are saved from God's wrath. The ark was their only hope of salvation. That was Noah and his family's salvation from the wrath of God in the flood. If you were not on the ark, you died. If you are not an heir of the righteousness that comes from faith in God, you will suffer eternal damnation. It comes down to this, if you do not have faith in God, you will die.

Noah and his family went in the one door. It's no coincidence there was only one way to get in the ark! This story of the flood was a temporary salvation for Noah and his family. They survived the flood, but eventually they all died. This story of temporary salvation helps us to understand our eternal salvation. There is only one way to be united with God in Heaven and that is through Jesus Christ! He has paid the price for sins so that you can become the righteousness of God. Don't lie to yourself and think that you can worry about it later. The time is now! For you, your family, your friends and neighbors, the time to place your faith in Jesus Christ is now. This

is urgent! We do not know how much time we have left. Noah didn't even know. The people in Noah's day didn't know. When Noah and all his family and the animals entered the ark, the door closed. It wasn't Noah who closed the door. The Lord shut it. He shut it a week before the flood came. I wonder if people thought they'd take Noah seriously when they actually saw the flood. They'd believe it when they see it. And if the flood came, then yeah they'd have faith in God too and get in the ark. Their time ran out though, because God shut that door. He isn't interested in you only believing in evidence. He wants you to have faith in Him! There will be a day when your time runs out. When everyone's time runs out, and only God knows when that is. Let us be people who have faith in God's Word like Noah did even when could not see things ahead of him. Let's be busy people who take action because of our faith and live boldly as his ambassadors like Noah did in a faithless generation. Let's not look to our own righteousness to save us but to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Let's turn to God in faith over and over and over again just as Noah did who walked with God and spent decades building the ark. Let's have faith in Jesus. The one who bled and died. He is the only door for God's children to walk through to enter salvation and be spared from the wrath of a holy God.