

## “Leading Your Home by Faith”

*Hebrews 11:7*

The editor of Time Magazine wrote an editorial expressing his despair at the world’s deepening plunge into evil. With somewhat tongue-in-cheek he wrote that if a news anchorperson were to make an evil report he/she should have a map of the world behind that would glow with a bright colour where overnight good had prevailed. But those parts of the world where evil was prevalent would be darkened. And then he/she would add up the moral evils and rate them on a scale of 1-10 in the different parts of the world.

That was the June 10<sup>th</sup> issue of Time – **June 10, 1991!** 30 years ago. Imagine if this was suggested today! The world is in bad shape of course, this is because of what humans are—sinners who are tainted in every part of their persons with sin. Most are not as bad as they can be. But apart from God’s grace, many have descended deep into darkness, though through God’s grace there are yet bright spots in this world.

But if we think things are bad today imagine trying to raise a family in Noah’s day. God said of Noah’s days in Genesis 6—“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (v. 5). As bad as our world is today, hopefully we have not reached the stage where “every inclination” of the thoughts of every man and woman’s heart are “only evil all the time.”

Knowing that about Noah’s day, it is remarkable how the author of Hebrews says Noah lived during that time:

*<sup>7</sup>By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

If Noah, a father trying to raise his children for God in a godless culture, built the ark to save his family, there has to be some biblical principles that we can learn on how we as fathers and mothers today, can help our children be people of faith in a godless culture. We explored this on Mother’s Day when we were also in Hebrews 11 looking at the example of Moses’ mother.

While its only one verse, it’s a long verse full of prepositional phrases and clauses and explanations. So it’s easy to lose sight of the main statement, which is ‘Noah built an ark to save his family.’ The rest of the verse explains why and how he was motivated and what resulted from it.

In Gen. 6:9 we read

*Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. <sup>10</sup>Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.*

These 3 sons were old enough to be married yet none of them had children, since we know God only spared 8 people from the flood. If Noah walked with God, he wanted the same for his children. And since God loved Noah, He wanted to help Noah raise a godly family in a very ungodly time in earth’s history. Surely Noah was struggling to do this. The world was full of evil influences. How to save them? Sometimes you need a motivator and God provided a very practical and vital motivation for Noah to help save his family; He gave him a warning. He told Noah what he was going to do to the world. In 6:12,

<sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup> So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. . . <sup>17</sup> I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. <sup>19</sup> You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. . .

<sup>22</sup> Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

This warning from God prioritized the need to save his family. Which gives us a good motivator as well to share the gospel with our families. Yet, let's also remember:

## **Warning About Future Judgment Shows God's Grace** **(11:7a)**

We often think of the warning in the gospel as being negative but really its about grace. We warn people about danger because we don't want them to experience it. Same with God. When Peter wrote his first epistle, he elaborated on Jesus' death in 3:18 and mentions Noah:

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

How patient was God when He told Noah to build the ark? Gen. 5:32 tells us Noah was 500 when he had his first child. In Gen. 11:10 we read Shem had his first son two years after the flood when he was 100. The sons were all married when they entered the ark and since age was longer even if we suggest they were around 50-75, Noah would have been building the ark for at least 25 years, possibly as many as 75. So it's not like God doesn't give people a grace period to listen to His warning that if we don't accept Him we will also be separated from Him and experience judgment, darkness and suffering forever.

So the warning of rejecting the gospel is a good motivator for sharing the gospel. We don't want to see our family members and close friends experience the pain of being separated from God forever. To warn people about danger is to show God's grace. It was Peter who also wrote about God's patience in 2 Pet. 3:9,

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Life is a wonderful gift by the grace of God. And He doesn't want us to suffer forever. He wants us to come to faith in Christ. And neither do we want that for our families, so we need to share the message so they experience God's grace in being saved.

<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. . .

Noah believed God's Word about a coming judgment on the wicked of the world and acted on that belief by doing what God said to save his family. If you think I'm spiritualizing this then you need to read the whole book of Hebrews. The whole point of Hebrews is make sure you're saved because some of you are not walking with God. Hebrews mentions judgment a lot. The most well-known is Heb. 9:27,

*<sup>27</sup> Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

Noah warned about things unseen; i.e. a worldwide flood – that had never been seen. Most scholars don't think they had ever seen actual rain because the earth was covered with an atmospheric water canopy, a greenhouse effect. When you look around you the world seems fine, it seems like it will go on forever, but it won't. Every earthquake, tornado, hurricane, catastrophe is a reminder that we live in an unstable world. And we all eventually die. We need to warn those closest to us, even if it means making unpopular decisions but you're acting on faith in God's Word. Even if it means believing and living for a Saviour (Jesus) whom you've never seen, believing in a God who you've never seen will judge the unbelievers and reward the believers. This is why Noah built the ark by faith, so that his family would be spared from God's judgment.

But just as warning people with judgment shows the grace of God,

## **Wanting to See Your Family Saved Models the Love of God (11:7b)**

Sharing God's Word with people shows we care. It's the message of God's love to them. As parents we want to see our children saved and so in our homes we

### ***Want to provide a safe environment from a sinful world (6:11-13, 7:1)***

This is what the ark provided. The ark saved them from a sinful world. Remember those verses we read earlier from Gen. 6:5?

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

And full of violence (v.13). The home becomes the safe place where we shield them from these things. Teach them truth. Remind them of God's love for them but also warn them about judgment because of sin. God used the ark to separate the evil influencers from the righteous. In reverence or holy fear, Noah did this. Noah believed God's Word and feared for his children, knowing what God would do. "The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov. 1:7). Wisdom and discipline are needed in the home to provide a foundation of love and teaching, where God is glorified and shared. And there we

### ***Remind them of God's ultimate purpose (11:7b)***

God's ultimate purpose is to have His people dwell with Him forever. He spared Noah and his family to model His desire to be with us. We read in Gen. 6, 7 that Noah pleased God, that Noah found favour with God and that Noah walked with God. It isn't a coincidence that the previous hero of the faith is Enoch who also, walked with God. When we walk with God here, we will walk with Him

forever. Enoch walked with God and then he was taken up to God. He never saw death. We will physically die, but we will never be separated from God. The most famous verse in Scripture reminds us;

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

There’s the warning ‘will not perish’ but there’s the ultimate purpose too, that we will have eternal life. That means once we accept Christ we have God now. We’re with Him. His Spirit dwells with us. And when we die we are directly in His presence. Where we read in Rev. 21:3,

*<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

In the Garden of Eden God enjoyed sinless fellowship with Adam and Eve. But when they sinned and sin entered the world, God had to banish them from His place of dwelling. It has been His desire and plan ever since to get us back together and the New Jerusalem becomes the New Eden.

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God commanded Noah, the male head of his family, to be responsible for saving his family. Doesn’t mean he was alone in this but that it was his responsibility to see that the promises and warnings of God’s words were shared in his home. We need to lead our homes in making sure God’s truths are modelled and shared, and also to the lost people we live around who don’t believe or are ignorant of a future world-wide judgment coming. So, Noah reminds us as well

## **Witnessing Demonstrates Faith in God’s Future Rewards** **(11:7c)**

It’s too easy to separate all these mini stories of faith in Hebrews 11 from the overall context. When we don’t stop at the chapter divisions this is how we read the end of Ch. 10 and 11:1,

*<sup>35</sup> So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. <sup>36</sup> You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. <sup>37</sup> For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay.*

*<sup>38</sup> But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

*<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

*<sup>11:1</sup> Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for.*

Sharing the message of hope in Jesus with family, friends and strangers is a demonstration of faith. That we

### ***Live for a hope we don’t see yet (11:1)***

The example of Noah is used to help us see that Noah believed God’s Word by faith that a world wide judgment was coming (yet unseen) and that he had to build an ark in order to save his family from a world wide flood(also unseen) in spite of what the world around him said (something very visible and present). This is what it means to live by faith. You make decisions based on what

God says about the future that you can't see yet, in spite of what you see in front of you and in spite of the consequences it will have in the present with those who reject God.

While 2 Pet. 2:5 calls Noah a 'preacher of righteousness' and I'm sure he warned those around him, I think his actions of building an ark was a powerful witness. The way we live should speak to those around us that we are not living for the rewards of this life but live to

***Please God which brings eternal rewards (11:6)***

V.6 says God rewards those who diligently pursue Him. Noah became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith – not by works. God declares us righteous when we place our faith in Him and His words, believing that what He says is true even though we can't see it yet.

Through God's Word Noah understood that the most important thing in life was to obey God and declare and live by faith with the goal that his family would also be saved. The author of Hebrews intentionally uses salvation language so we get the illustration. Nine verses earlier the author of Hebrews quoted Hab. 2:4 in 10:38 to remind us that the righteous live by faith. God rewards faith. And I think the greatest reward next to Jesus and God themselves, is not streets of gold or ' mansion over the hilltop' but the reward of spending all eternity with those nearest to us in life whom we had the opportunity to model and share Jesus with them and they too believed by faith and became an heir of righteousness.

It's not a coincidence that v.6 precedes the Noah account, which says

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Enoch wasn't the only one who was rewarded for his faith. So was Noah, Abraham, Joshua, Moses, etc. And so will we if we live by faith to please Him.

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