



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:1–14, 22

“Noah and the Work of Faith”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege again of turning to the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way in which they throw light upon our paths, even centuries later, from the time they were written. We thank Thee for the fact that they are always good for us and edifying for us and build us up in our faith to live the life that Thou wouldst have us to live in nineteen ninety-three. We thank Thee for the confidence that the Holy Spirit gives us in the Scriptures. We recognize that they are, indeed, Lord, the word of God and we ask that we may truly respond to them in that way and may the Holy Spirit, who teaches the Scriptures to us, teach us this evening as we read and ponder some of the events in the life of one of the great men of the word of God. We pray Thy blessing upon each one here and upon their families. We pray for this church and for its leadership and its members and friends, and we pray, Lord, that Thou will give guidance and direction to our elders and may the result be that the testimony that exists here may continue to honor our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And now, Lord, we look to Thee as we study the Scriptures together.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for this evening, as we continue our study of the Epistle to the Hebrews is “Noah and the Work of Faith” and, I think, it is most appropriate for us to turn back to the 6th chapter of the book of Genesis first, before we read the one verse of chapter 11 of Hebrews

that touches upon the life of Noah. Genesis chapter 6, and I'll read verse 1 through verse 14, and then verse 22. Moses writes.

“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. [The intervening words tell us the instructions that God gave Noah. And then in verse 22, Noah's response.] Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.”

Well, we have seen a very interesting exhibition of our mission control in Florida, recently. They have been seeking to examine the planet Mars more considerably than they have previously and

we know, of course, that they’ve lost touch and that there is something wrong, evidently, with what has been happening.

Well, a number of years ago, Apollo 8, the operation Apollo 8, was conducted by our NASA officials and the result was a remarkable exhibition and the work still stands as one of the great exhibitions of the kind of work that NASA does. It, also, represented one of the greatest exhibitions of the work of faith that the world has ever seen. I have before me an article that appeared in the *Dallas Morning News*, twenty-five years ago on December the twenty-sixth, nineteen sixty-eight, when the astronauts finally had passed into the back part of the moon and then in their return to the earth, everything rested, as far as they were concerned, upon the rocket in the spacecraft and whether the service propulsion systems would work and the result was that when they fired it up, of course, it worked and they got back safely. I’m sure that one of the things that appeared in the article is the statement, “Astronauts trust their equipment.”

Well, of course, to trust the equipment is great, but sometimes equipment fails. In the case of the word of God, things are different. And in the case of Noah, we have a remarkable exhibition of faith and the faith that Noah exhibited was trust in God and it, of course, worked. So the men of the Bible, here and there, and particularly in Hebrews, chapter 11, give us an illustration of what it is to trust in the Lord God.

Thomas Carlyle once wrote, “The history of the world is but the biography of great men.” Well, Noah was such a man, and his faith was just such a faith. It was a faith that worked. And when he placed his faith in God’s word, he built his ark, and the result was a remarkable exhibition of the working of faith. And, surely, in the day in which Noah lived, his work of faith glowed wonderfully in the light of the times. Just think of the times of Noah and you can appreciate so much more how significant it was for this man to trust the word of God.

Listen to the way in which our Lord Jesus describes the days of Noah. He says in verse 37 of Matthew chapter 24.

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” [This is not nineteen ninety-three, but this is as he says, in the days of Noah.] “They were marrying and giving in marriage,” [eating and drinking,] “until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

So in the kind of day in which Noah exercised his great faith, we have at least a small illustration of today and when men today believe the word of God and live accordingly, there is something of similarity between Noah’s faith and the faith of men and women today. His faith, of course, was not in space hardware, but in something more substantial. As we’ve said, the word of God. But it was a faith that worked.

It’s proper, I think, to record it now as far as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is concerned, because he’s talked about the worship of faith in his verses on Abel. He’s talked about the walk of faith in his verses on Enoch. And it’s natural for our worship that blossoms into walk to issue in work. And so Noah and his story is the story of the work of faith. I’m sure that many of us would probably agree with some who say that Noah, after Jonah is perhaps the best-known Bible character, other than, of course, our Lord. After all, he’s the one who is responsible for bringing, humanly speaking, in the obedience to the word of God he’s responsible for bringing mankind through the great judgment of the flood. And so in one sense, he’s the savior of mankind, physically. Those eight souls that were in the ark were the result of God’s word to Noah and his impression of it upon his family. And so you cannot help but think of him as one of the great characters of the Bible. Of course, it may be that the flood has made him great, too, because to think of universe.

There was a political speaker who was warming up to his subject once and in the midst of his subject he said, “As Daniel Webster says in his great dictionary,” he began by way of illustration, and there came a voice from the audience that said, “Hey, it was Noah who wrote the dictionary.” “You are mistaken, my friend,” said the speaker, unabashed. “Noah built the ark.” Well, we know it

was Noah Webster that is responsible for the dictionary, but our political friend didn't realize that and he wanted to take down his critic by saying that it was Noah that built the ark. At least he knew that. That would indicate that Noah is a character of the Bible that is universally known.

The point of this passage, as you can see from Genesis, chapter 6, is that there is a new state in the progress of evil. Sin has been spreading as a result of the fact that when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, we not only come under the condemnation of God, but we have a sin nature. And the sin nature or the principle of sin dwelling within us has been spreading so that the Lord finally says in Genesis, chapter 6 in verse 3, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh. Yet, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” Sin has spread through the person and the persons who have descended from Adam. Sin has spread through the families and now it has spread through the race. And you can see the difference between Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 6:5.

In Genesis 1:31, after God created all things, we read in Scripture, “Then God saw everything that He had made and indeed it was very good. So, the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” But now, in chapter 6, in verse 5, in the same kind of expression we read, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth.” Everything good after the creation; but now the wickedness of man is great. Man has, evidently, come beyond self-help and so God now must act.

Now, verses 1 through 7 of chapter 6 in verse 12 and 13, speak of the resolve of God and if you read this you cannot help but think that man's evil is insufficient to account for the flood. That is, just the kind of evil that we ordinarily see. The flood was a tremendous judgment upon mankind, and there is a clue in the text that suggests why it is such a tremendous judgment. Not simply what we would think of as the spread of evil in the human race, but there is more to it than that. In fact, the last straw is described for us in verse 1 through verse 4. He says, “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

Now, if you'll look at the Old Testament and study the expression “the sons of God” you will discover that the term “the sons of God” is a reference to angelic beings, not human beings. And so what we have in this particular incident is something that really could be called the last straw. The last straw of disobedience to the disobedience of the spread of evil in human beings since the fall in the garden there is added the immoral compromise with the demonic world.

In 1 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 1, the apostle uses an expression that is very significant, I think. He says, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” And so what evidently is by Moses, in Genesis chapter 6, is immoral compromise with the demonic world. Yet they had the light of creation, they had the light of conscience, they had the light of the word of God because God had told Adam and Eve how they should approach him as is evident by the fact that Abel approached by sacrifice, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, and so we know that Abel had a word from God.

So we have creation, we have conscience, we have the word of God, and we have the preaching of Noah. For Noah, you know, is called in the New Testament a preacher of righteousness. We have also the life of Enoch, who walked with God. So what we have here is something of ultimate punishment. It's described again in verse 5 through verse 7. Verse 3, suggests, of course, that there is a proximate probation; that is, there is a probationary period of one hundred and twenty years which is mercifully given to Noah and the men of his day. But then in 5 through 7, we read, I'll read this again because I think it's important, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” And so he said that he would destroy them.

Now, He had also said in verse 4, “There were giants on the earth in those days and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

Now, there are a lot of questions that would arise from this and we don't have time to talk about them tonight; but if you are interested, you can go back to the tapes and some of the things that are found in the tapes would explain some of these particular points. But we are looking at Hebrews, and so we cannot treat in detail this.

Simply, to say that it was some kind of union that was taking place between men and angelic beings; probably through influence and perhaps through a kind of personal indwelling of human beings. At any rate, it was the last word and God announces judgment upon the earth.

Now, Noah and his righteousness are described in verse 8 through verse 10. Noah found grace in the Lord. He found grace. There's a marvelous expression in the New Testament in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, in which the apostle speaks of what it means to find grace. He says of the Lord and his power, “who has saved us, and called us, with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, before time began.”

So Noah found that grace that had been given before time began and it led to a place, a standing of righteousness before God, and a walk with God. So he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. In verse 9, it says he walked with the Lord, and that he was a just man. I assume that what this means, as the Bible unfolds this, is that he had come to believe in the Lord and believed in Him as the savior of sinners, and in believing in Him as the savior of sinners, he had had righteousness imputed to him—as we today have when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and he had begun to walk with the Lord as a result of the work of God in his heart.

One of the finest of the Christian men in the history of Christianity in more recent centuries was William Cowper. We know William Cowper most of us would pronounce his name “Cooper” but I happen to know because I was in Scotland once and was corrected and was pointed out to me by someone who was doing a doctoral dissertation on William Cowper that his name was actually pronounced, “William Cowper.” He lived in the 18th century, and he had written such great hymns as “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood” and a number of other ones. “God Works in Mysterious

Ways, His Wonders to Perform.” It may not be known by all that Cowper was a person who had mental difficulties, from his early days, and finally he was in what was called at that time a “lunatic house.” And he was converted while he was in a lunatic house. He was a very sensitive individual; had been a sensitive man from his childhood. Extremely sensitive and his mother had died when he was early and it had a tremendous impact upon him. But, at any rate, at one time in that lunatic house, where he was kept, he came down one morning and he had always had a love for the Bible, but in the kind of condition he was in, he didn’t often read it. But he picked up the Bible and he read it and he read Romans chapter 3 in verse 21 through verse 25, the great passage, which speaks about being justified by grace. I’ll just read the passage.

But he said that, “Now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.” And, as he was looking at that text and meditating upon it, he said, “later on, I received strength to believe.” A marvelous little expression! You can tell, of course, that Cowper was a Calvinist and became a stronger and healthier Calvinist. He received strength to believe.

Well, I think, that’s probably exactly what happened to Noah. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The emphasis rests upon the fact that it is God’s work that brings us to the knowledge of the Lord.

Now, the remedy that God suggested for the situation, the wickedness and corruption of the society of Noah, is described for us in verse 14 through verse 21. I won’t go into the details, but it is simply the remedy of the provision of the ark. And so Noah is given instructions about how to build the ark.

It’s very interesting, too, to realize that even though man has become so wicked as he has become, God has already given assurance of a redemption that is to come, also. For, remember, all the way back to Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15, we have been told in Holy Scripture by the Lord God,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise or crush your head,” Satan, “and you shall crush his heel.”

So even though the earth is so corrupt, that it is necessary to destroy it, except for the eight souls, the promises of God found in Genesis, chapter 3, in verse 15, which ultimately lead up to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself, who is the “seed of the woman,” still are valid.

What we talk about when we talk about the “grace of God” in the Bible, is unconditional grace. And God has given His promise. And even though it is necessary to destroy all but the eight souls, the promises of God still prevail. That is so important in reading Scripture to realize that simple fact. It’s simple, but nevertheless, it’s very profound.

The ark, of course, was a very illustrative boat because it was typical of the sheltering of the nation Israel in the tribulation that is to come. And it’s also typical of the sheltering of the believer in Christ from the wrath to come by atonement. In fact, the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter chapter 3, makes reference to that very fact; that the ark is a typical instrument given by the Lord God. And so it is a picture of the sheltering of the believer in Christ from the wrath to come by the atonement the Lord Jesus would offer.

Emil Brunner was one of the more liberal neo-orthodox men of the past generation. Professor Brunner was the professor of Dogmatic Theology or Systematic Theology of the University at Zurich. And he was a man who was very much a man of the society of his day, and so he didn’t disdain the familiar which individuals would be acquainted with. His scholarship was a wise kind of scholarship, although in many ways it was not really biblical, and he did not believe in the thorough inspiration of the word of God. But he did speak about the cheap, optimistic humanistic theology of the nineteen thirties and the early nineteen forties. And he spoke of it as theology that ignored righteousness and the penalty of sin and he compared it to a woman who diligently sewed with no knot in the thread. In other words, there isn’t anything on which we can really hold to and be sure that it is truly reliable.

Well, Noah’s response is given to us in verse 22, thus, after the instructions are given to him, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” Notice that Noah did not give God any instructions. He simply followed God’s instructions. That’s the greatest error that a man can make, to think that he may get to heaven by ignoring the instructions that God has given in his word. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, and the instructions are given in the Bible. As we’ve so often cited in this particular auditorium and it’s been cited by almost everyone who has preached here, that the Lord Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we might be saved. Follow instructions is the way by which men come to salvation in Jesus Christ. And the instructions are very simple, that our Lord Jesus has offered the atoning sacrifice. Believe in him! Faith involves knowledge of what Christ has done. It involves assent to that great fact of the atoning work of Calvary’s cross and it involves trust in what he’s done. We’ll talk about that in just a moment. But, at any rate, God’s remedy is the construction of the ark and Noah’s response is to follow instructions.

Now, think for a moment, follow instructions? I’m going to take the position that I’m going to get to heaven by simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? And that my works do not in any way qualify me for heaven? What would the man in the street say about that? Well, the man in the street would say that that’s all wrong. The idea that we can get to heaven by what Christ has done is not ration[al] for us in the twentieth century.

Practically everybody believes that we get to heaven by being good. Don’t they? Come on? Don’t they? Yes. It’s true. Everybody believes that we get to heaven by what we do. Our newspapers are filled with it. All of the things that we read are filled with it. We get to heaven by the things that we do. Some are going to get there and others are not going to get there. But those that get there are going to get there by what they have done.

Now, that’s easy for people to believe, of course. Get there by what you have done, because that ministers to our pride and to our sense of personal righteousness. But, now, let’s take Noah. I

would say, it does take something in the twentieth century to believe we get to heaven only through Jesus Christ. You have to take a stand, don't you? With your friends, with the people with whom you have society, you have to take a stand.

But compare your stand with Noah's. Noah? I want you to build an ark. Four hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, forty-five feet high. Build this great hulk of a ship and build it on dry land, Noah. Far from the sea. Far from the water. In fact, there are some who say that it had never even rained until this particular time, in the development of the divine revelation.

So just imagine what people would think when they came to Noah and said, “What in the world are you doing, Noah?” “Well, I'm building an ark. There's a flood coming.” And can you not image what they would say? Noah has completely lost it. How could anyone possibly believe the things that Noah is talking about? As a matter of fact, only seven people other than Noah got in that ark. So you can understand that this is a fantastic exhibition of faith; with rain unknown, an inland barge, and with the idea that we are told in 2 Peter, chapter 3, where Noah's flood is mentioned again, the idea of uniformitarianism which has infected all of our society, that is, that everything that has happened will happen in the future has happened in the past. You can see how the scientist and the religious men and the common men would have all united to say that this is totally foolish, fantastic.

Now, I suggest to you that that is precisely what we have today with the doctrines of the word of God. If you will study the doctrines of the word of God, you will find that the doctrines of the word of God are the doctrines that our society does not, at all, accept. Cannot accept by reason of their unbelief.

The idea of an atoning work by a God-man is so contrary to their thinking, they are so rebellious with reference to it, that there is, I think, a very, very significant parallel between Noah's day and our day, except perhaps in our day it's even worse. But Noah's fantastic faith is astonishing.

Now, the writers of the New Testament speak of the irrational faith of the believers on a number of occasions. I say “irrational” from the standpoint of the world. Take Peter. Just simple

little incidents requiring faith. Peter and the men with him had fished all night and had caught nothing. Now, Peter was a fisherman. He made his livelihood from fishing. The Lord Jesus was not a fisherman. I'm sure as a human, if we look at him only as a human, he would have learned a great deal about fishing because his friends were fishermen and he lived around the Sea of Galilee. So he knew a great deal about it. But these men were in the business of fishing. And so, he comes by after they'd fished all night and caught nothing. And so he said to Peter, “Now, Peter, launch out into the deep and catch fish.” And Peter objected. “We fished all night. We caught nothing. We know where to fish.” The one place you don't fish in the middle of the day is in the deep, cause the fish, they'll be hiding then. Don't fish in the deep. If you're going to fish, fish in the shallows. Don't fish in the deep. But we fished all night. And so they go ought and, of course, they caught so many fish that the boat almost sank with it, and then Peter, overcome with the significance of the fact that the God of Israel is in the boat with him, cries out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Now, that was fantastic faith, on the part of Peter. In fact, Luke, when he describes it, he said that Peter said, “Lord we fished all night and have caught nothing. But, nevertheless, at Thy word.” At Thy word, we'll launch out. Now, that was a great exhibition of faith on the part of the Apostle Peter.

Think of Gideon. His was a magnificent exhibition of faith, too. The Midanites. One hundred thirty-two thousand, weren't they? They had about thirty thousand. Thirty-two thousand, I believe, when God got through eliminating those that weren't necessary, Gideon wound up with three hundred men to fight one hundred thirty-two thousand men. The odds are not good; not good at all. And then when Gideon is told, now, the way I want you to win this battle is with a trumpet and some trumpets, don't give them guns. Don't give them swords; give those trumpets and, also, a lantern and light.

Now, you know what happened; there's no need to belabor the point. What happened was that they blew the trumpet in the night and they broke that lantern and the lights were there. And the Midianites were so astonished by what had happened they got up and killed each other. But what

a great exhibition of faith on the part of Gideon and the three hundred. The three hundred who were true servants of the Lord.

Joshua at Jericho [Laughter] I always laugh at this. When Joshua comes to Jericho and Joshua is told by the Lord, now, the way we're going to do this is we're going to go around the city once. So the army of the children of Israel goes around the city of Jericho, around the walls, once a day for six days. Can you imagine the people on the walls of Jericho, making fun of them? What in the world are those people doing? They're just marching around the city, playing the music, marching. But on the seventh day, he said, now, what I want you to do on the seventh day is to do it seven times. And, again, can you not imagine the people? And then, I want you to shout! Just shout! And the walls fell down. No wonder the people in Jericho were slain and decimated. You would be, too, if somebody shouted and the whole walls fell down. You knew that there was something that happened.

But this is just the same old thing that the Bible keeps saying, over and over again, that it is simple faith in the word of God, by which the victories of the children of God are won. It's not by our strength. It's not by our might. Oh, ultimately, it's because of the sovereign grace promised to us in eternity past, that becomes ours in time, but it's God who wins the victories. And that, of course, is what happened then.

But now, we want to turn to the New Testament. It's just one verse. It's very significant in some ways. But we'll look now at what the New Testament has to say about this Old Testament event. In one sense, it really is the New Testament commentary on the flood in Noah's day. We read in verse 7 of chapter 11 of Hebrews.

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

You’ll notice, his conception of faith, “By faith, Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen.” He is a man, just like the other men of this chapter are. He’s a man who is controlled by the future and controlled by what God says with reference to the future. That’s his conception of faith. “By faith, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared the ark.”

You know, that really is the principle by which you get saved. You, who read the word of God or hear the word of God, being divinely warned “of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear,” which God has implanted in your heart, do what he says should be done, and that is, believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, the conduct of his faith is described in this. He was “moved with godly” faith and he prepared the ark by faith. What is faith? Well, we are told by theologians, properly, that faith is the channel through which grace comes. The saving faith, which is the means by which we enter into the experience of salvation, is precisely that. It is the means by which we enter into something. There is no value in faith itself. Faith is simply the means. It’s the hand of the heart, some have said. It’s the means by which we enter into the blessings of life. The ark was prepared by faith and now, “By faith, Noah, divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared the ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world.”

So Noah then is a person then who believes the word of God, he’s controlled by the word of God, and in Hebrews, chapter 11, the word of God is always, almost always as far as I remember, is always toward the future. It’s the promises which these men believe and by which they lived.

So faith is the channel through which grace comes. But what is faith itself? Well, I mentioned earlier that faith is composed of knowledge, assent, trust. These things make up saving faith. Everyone who has been truly saved has the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and what he’s done. He has assented to that message and he has given himself to the Lord.

I have in my notes an illustration of a skeptical physician, who had a patient who was a Christian. And he asked the patient, he said, “I can never understand saving faith. I believe in God

and I suppose I believe in Jesus Christ. I'm not conscious of any doubts. I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and I believe in the Bible. Yet, I'm not saved. What's the matter with me?"

"Well," said the patient, "A day or two ago, I believed in you. I believed in you as a very skillful physician. I believed that you would be able to heal me, if I should get sick. Then I realized that I was sick. And I sent for you, and put myself in your hands to be healed. In other words, I trusted you. For two days now, I've been taking some mysterious stuff out of a bottle." It is mysterious stuff, isn't it? Have you noticed when you go to get medicine? What do they do? They go back in the back or they go over on the counter. Often you can't see exactly where they get what they bring to you. It seems to me, to encourage confidence in what they're doing, they ought to do that right in front of you. But they don't do that. They go over there and if you are the kind of person who may have some doubts, you may wonder about taking that medicine. But what do you do? You just take it. You don't even know what it is! The name itself completely bamboozles you. But, nevertheless, you take it.

And so, this man said that. He said, "I don't know what it is. I don't understand it. I'm trusting you. Now, when ever you turn to the Lord Jesus," he went on to say, "say to him, 'Lord Jesus, Christianity seems to me to be full of mysteries. I do not understand them but I believe that you are trustworthy and I trust you. I commit myself to you.'" That's faith!

Well, it's very simple thing. The faith of the patient didn't heal him. It was the remedy that healed him. Your faith does not save you. It is Christ who saves you. Always make the difference! It's not your faith that saves you. Now, I know, you'll say, "The Bible says on occasion, 'By faith I saved thee.'" In fact, the Lord Jesus said that. "Thy faith hath saved thee." But it's faith as the instrumentality by which we lay hold of Christ.

It's Christ who saves. You don't have anything dedicated to faith as the savior of the soul. Christ is the Savior of the soul. But, it's the faith, the remedy, the medicine that saves. So, saving faith is simply the faith that takes Christ to save. That's saving faith.

So Noah, being divinely warned “of things not yet seen,” took the medicine. So he prepared an ark, for the saving of his household, “by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

You’ll notice the consequences of Noah’s faith are twofold by which he condemned the world. Now that “which” can be faith, it can be the ark. I’m going to take it as the ark, “by which he condemned the world.”

Now, what I mean by that is that when Noah started building that ark, every nail that was put in the ark was a testimony to the truth of God. And it also was a testimony of condemnation to those who did not respond to the message that Noah was preaching. Now, Noah, we know was a herald of righteousness. We are told that in the word of God, in 2 Peter chapter 2, in verse 5. So Noah had one hundred and twenty years in which he was able to preach. And he is called a herald of righteousness. That’s a word that means to herald is to, it’s not simply to teach, as I’m doing tonight, but to herald is to shout out effectively the truth that God had given him to shout out; that the flood was coming and that safety was found only in the ark.

So Noah built the ark and by that very building of it, the world was judged. Every tree that was cut down, every axe stroke in the process of cutting down the tree was itself, part of the condemnation to those who did not come to get in the ark. Every plank that was brought in. Every nail that was nailed in the planks. Plus the sermons. All of these things were things that condemned the world about him when they did not respond. His pulpit was the shipyard. His voice was the ring of hammer. As someone has said, “They laughed at Noah, but Noah had the last laugh.”

There’s an old story about a couple of men who were well-known in the past. One of them was Alcibiades, and he was a man who really hated Socrates and so he said to him one time, “Socrates, I hate you. For every time I meet you, you show me what I am.”

So for one hundred and twenty years, Noah was busy speaking out of the faith that God had given him and all of the hundred and twenty years were years of condemnation for those who did not respond to the message.

One of the finest men who ever lived in Aristotes was called Aristotes the Just. They voted to banish and ostracize him. One man asked why he had so voted, answered, “Because I’m tired of hearing Aristotes called “the Just.””

I know that Noah was not popular at all, and even when they realized what was happening, perhaps, they became even more angry at Noah. But God says, not only was the world condemned, but he became heir of the righteousness, which is according to faith. Noah recognized he had no special rights. He cast himself upon God and his provision. He was justified by grace.

That word “heir,” heir of righteousness, what that specifies is grace. Everybody who is an heir of father or mother, or whoever, is the recipient of grace. When you receive out of your heirship money or property, you receive things that come to you by grace. Heirship is a word of grace. So when I received some money from my father, when he died, that was a gracious gift from him. I did not earn it. As a matter of fact, if he had thought more wisely and thought more deeply, he might not have allowed it to come to me. It’s grace.

And so Noah is the heir of a righteousness of faith. He was the recipient of the grace of God. He found grace and here he is the heir of righteousness, which is according to faith. Crucial task, given to one man, given to Noah.

Now, I’d like to ask you to turn with me now to 2 Peter chapter 2 in verse 5, and we’ll close with just a few comments. 2 Peter chapter 2 in verse 5, is another mention of Noah. And this is the passage that mentions him as a preacher of righteousness. 2 Peter chapter 2 in verse 5. Did I say, yes, I’m looking at 1 Peter. It’s just not there. 2 Peter chapter 2 in verse 5 and Peter writes, “And did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

Do not think for one moment, as we pointed out in connection with Enoch, that this man lived in an easy age. He did not have an easy life in an easy age; he lived in a world that was characterized by corruption and by ungodliness. In fact, as Jude says, with reference to Enoch, “It

was a world that was filled with ungodliness and every thought and intent of the individuals who were upon the earth was to do that which was contrary to the word of God. It was an evil age.”

And Noah was no hermit. He was a public figure, a family man, and in that evil age, an age of violence, an age of degeneration, an age of disintegration, of rudimentary knowledge of the Lord God, Noah believed the word of God and constructed the ark. A herald of righteousness, a positive force in a wicked day.

Well, it's possible to be face to face with truth and to pass it by. Judas is an illustration of that. Judas was a man who heard the sermons of our Lord and was a lost man and finally went out and committed suicide, so torn up within over what had happened to him. The thief who hung by the side of the Lord Jesus Christ had testimony from the things that were said around him and then testimony from our Lord himself. To not turn away from it as individuals have in the word of God to respond to the word but bring it down to us today. Think of all the opportunities that exist in our society to turn to the word of the Scriptures. We are filled with this on the radio, our friends, our Christian friends, it's difficult in our society not to bump into a Christian somewhere; and yet, we do not respond to the things of the word of God. It's possible to be face to face with truth and pass it by.

And let me say this, and I say this out of a real sense of pain in my heart. There are individuals who have been in this auditorium in Believers Chapel. They have heard ministry from the word of God and some of them have heard it more than once. Some of them have heard it for Sunday after Sunday, for periods of time, and have turned away and have not responded to the word of God. These are the things that the Scriptures talk about. Think of all the listeners to Noah, who heard him preach, and then the flood came and what Noah had preached did come to pass. The same kind of feeling of remorse that must have come over some of them is the remorse that individuals feel today, when the judgment comes or death comes, and failure is what has taken place.

Judas said as he died, of course, words that suggest the remorse that had touched him, not true repentance, but remorse that touched him. O, how horrible it would be to have that kind of remorse, having had opportunity, to understand the word of God.

Many years ago, I was preaching in Houston and I made, that's in my younger days, said some things that didn't have particular relationship to the word of God. As far as I know, they were not contrary to it. But I remember making a statement that in connection with this, of how close you can be to the word of God, and then be lost. And I made the statement in the message, it was in [indistinct] Church in Houston. In fact, it was back in nineteen forty-nine or about that time. And I made the statement that Noah's carpenters would have surely been astonished to realize that what Noah was talking about really has come to pass. And since it was Noah's family that was saved, I made the point. You could have actually could have been a carpenter on the ark and be lost. How terrible that would be.

Well, there was a man who was the general manager of the Manchester Terminal Corporation, in the audience. Tom Picks was his name. So the next night he came to me with a little sheet of paper, two sheets of paper, which he had worked out. He was paying attention to what was being said. He said, “The question is, were there carpenters other than Noah and his sons used in constructing the ark.” Now then, he went on to say, “Let's assume that Mrs. Noah and her daughters-in-law, did most of the work producing food. Noah and his sons could put in ten or more hours, per day, for one hundred and twenty years. One hundred and twenty years times four men equals four hundred and eighty man years. Four hundred and eighty man years times 360 working days, would be one hundred and seventy-two thousand eight hundred man days. One hundred and seventy-two thousand eight hundred man days, times ten hours per day, would be one million, seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand man hours. A tree planted when the keel was laid, would have been used for constructing the top decks. “When were termites invented?” That was a little aside. [Laughter] Then he went on to say, “One million seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand hours times \$2.25 per hour.” Things have really changed. [More laughter] Minimum wage now is \$4.50

and Clinton wants to raise it. But then it was about \$2.25 or at least that’s what the Manchester Terminal paid.

So he said, “That would be three million eight hundred and eighty-eight thousand dollars and if you add compensation insurance, retirement and old age benefits, it’d be another seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand.” And he said, “The total ark bill would be four million, six hundred and sixty-five dollars.” Wait! “Six hundred and sixty-five thousand and six hundred dollars, for labor only.” And so, he said, “I don’t see any need for any carpenters on the ark. Noah and his family built the ark.” Well, thus went one of my applications. [Laughter]

Well, Noah’s statistics are not exciting, but in saving seven, he saved the world. Let’s never forget that. He had seven converts, so far as we know. Think! Preached for one hundred and twenty years; had seven converts. Numbers are never the measure of significance. The Judge of all the earth does right and if only seven other souls are brought to the knowledge of the Lord, the whole world was involved in that. What a man of faith Noah was.

Please remember faith is composed of knowledge. Christ died for sinners. Assent, it’s true. Trust; I’ll take the medicine. I’ll bow my head. I’ll say, thank you Lord for dying for sinners. That’s what I am. You’ve offered the free gift of eternal life. I take your free gift.

From God’s standpoint, when that happens, new life is given. Just as Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, so you, too, find grace in the eyes of the Lord, when you believe his word. He gives you a new life, a new heart, a new sense of responding to the divine truth and thus begins the life of faith.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this great man, who has gone on and is in Thy presence at this very moment. We thank Thee for the faith that he exhibited, we thank Thee for the marvelous deliverance that Thou didst give to him and to those with him. We thank Thee for the revelation of the need of divine judgment, for our society, too, and the individuals in it face the truth

“Noah and the Work of Faith” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

of the word of God that there is divine judgment for sin. We know the wages of sin is death. But we thank Thee, Lord, that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Enable us, Lord, in our society, in which we live, to be like Noah, a witness of the truth of God.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.