

Faith and the flood – Hebrews 11:7
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church - 11 September 2007

In Hebrews 11, the writer bombards us with portrait after portrait of Old Testament people who had faith. And what did their faith make them do? It made them cling to God and be faithful to him and serve him. They are there as examples to us.

This morning we come to a third great hero of faith: Noah. You can read all about him in Genesis 6–9. He lived in desperately wicked times (see **Genesis 6:5**). But he was different. He was a man of faith in the Lord. And he was righteous. Here are four consequences of his faith.

i Awe

Hebrews 11:7 points us to the fact that Noah's faith led him to feel a "**holy fear**". In **Genesis 6:11-14**, God reveals to him that he's going to flood the earth, and he tells him to build the ark. Noah does not reject God's word on "the balance of probabilities". He responds with "**holy fear**". We too, according to **Hebrews 12:28-29**, ought to know something of the fear of God.

What is the fear of God? It's a sense of awe at him. The fear of God is the awe which you cannot help but feel towards God when you understand his holiness and your own insignificance in comparison.

Every Christian here should feel a sense of awe at God. You need to understand his holiness, his otherness; and you need to understand your own insignificance in comparison. And where will that understanding come from? From your faith in God as the supreme being in the universe.

Do you feel awe towards God? If you do, it will show, as we will now see...

ii Action

Noah had faith in God's word and he took action. He built the ark to save his family. And he preached righteousness (see **II Peter 2:5**).

Actually, true faith always leads to action. That is the point which James makes in **James 2:26**, when he writes, "**Faith without deeds is dead.**" A non-active faith is a non-genuine faith. The characteristic of faith which comes out in each of these portraits which we're looking at on Sunday mornings is that faith leads to action.

That's a good test for you and me. How can you tell whether you have a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? You can ask yourself this question. "What does my faith do? Does it lead to action?" If it does literally nothing, it's a non-faith. It's not genuine.

But there's more too...

iii Adherence

Noah's faith also led to adherence, to perseverance. **Genesis 6:1-3** suggests that Noah built and preached for 120 years. That's a long time!

Can you feel the challenge of Noah's persevering faith here? Like him, you need faith in the Lord. And like him, that faith should make you persevere. Sometimes, of course, that's very hard indeed. You'll need to look up to the Lord. And you'll need to press on. But God gave Noah the grit to keep going for 120 years, and if you hope in him, he will give you the tenacity to slog on. He will even honour you for it in the end.

Yet, there's something even more striking about Noah's faith...

iv Admonition

Noah's faith led to admonition. He warned and challenged the world around him. Day after day he preached righteousness. Day after day he built the ark. Day after day, therefore, he challenged the world around him. He urged the people to repent.

How many people listened? How many people repented of their sin? None. None except his wife, his three sons and his three daughters-in-law. Nobody else responded to his message. Years of service: 120. Believers: 0.

And so it was that the people were caught completely by surprise. That's tragic, because it had all been so avoidable because of Noah's warnings. In fact, you could say that his preaching and his building added to their condemnation. They had to face eternity in the full knowledge that someone had commanded them to repent. **"By his faith Noah condemned the world..."**

There's a very clear parallel with us. The flood was a reality for the people of Noah's day. Hell is a reality for people in our day. Like Noah, we need to admonish people. Like Noah, we need to be up front with people about their sin, though that's very counter-cultural. Like Noah, we need to tell people the good news too: in our case that there is salvation through Jesus Christ.

And yet, for all that, we know that so many people will still be unprepared to meet their Maker. We might put the gospel across in the most basic, most powerful, most uncompromising, fashion. We might spend hours explaining it to people and answering their questions. We might water the seed with hours of prayer. And yet still so many people will reject the message and still they will be unprepared to meet their Maker. You could even say that such people are adding to their own condemnation according to passages such as **Luke 12:47-48**. Those who know the gospel and refuse to believe it are in the most precarious position in the universe. This is such a sobering truth.

How can you keep on going, then? It's going to take faith: God-given, super-human, faith. It's going to take complete confidence in the Lord who governs the universe according to his perfect and brilliant plans. Do you have that faith? Ask God to help you. Keep your eyes fixed on him. And go on. He is able to equip you and to keep you going.

What if you don't have faith, though? Well, then, cry out to God for salvation. Pray to him. Ask him to forgive you for your sin. Ask him to give you faith and then put that faith squarely in Jesus Christ who died and rose for sinners. Ask him to help you to live for him. If you do, you will find him ready to accept you, to welcome you, to save you.