

# Hebrews

Hebrews 11:7-10 – Examples of Faith - Part 1

October 18, 2009

I. **Hebrews 11:7-10** . . . By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. [8] By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. [9] By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; [10] for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

II. Prayer

III. Examples of Faith

A. **Hebrews 11:7** . . . By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

1. The story of Noah is found in **Genesis 5:28 - 9:29**. In that portion of scripture we read these words: Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (**Genesis 6:9b**)

a. In **I John 3:7-8** we read . . . Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. [8] The one who practices sin is of the devil.

(1) What I want you to see is that this comparison between the practice of righteousness and the practice of sin is not an all or nothing comparison. It is not a case of being perfectly righteous or else you are totally unrighteous.

(2) With the exception of Jesus, no human being has ever been or ever will be perfectly righteous. Therefore, what we just read in **I John 3:7-8**, is a comparison between **living so much one way that the few times you do the other become insignificant by comparison**. With that in mind, lets return to Noah and see how he is an example for us today of living by faith.

- b. Out of all the people living on the earth at that time, only Noah was labeled a righteous man. Only Noah practiced righteousness to the degree that in relation to his label his faults were considered insignificant by comparison. Which brings us to the next label contained in **Genesis 6:9** . . . Only Noah was called blameless or perfect by God.
  - c. Now there is one more thing in **Genesis 6:9** that is said about Noah. Noah walked with God. This means Noah had an intimately personal relationship with God. His knowledge of God was not limited to book learning or theology, and his relationship was not from a distance. Noah knew God up close and personal – like two dear friends know each other, like Enoch knew God, and like Abraham knew God.
2. What is my point so far? Noah found favor with God – and it was saving favor at that. You see, Noah was not just selected to do a great work for God – that is, build the ark. Of all the people on the earth, only Noah and his family were saved from God’s judgment on sin and unrepentant sinners. Why? Because in living by faith – before, during, and after he built the ark – he lived a life that was pleasing and acceptable to God.
3. Now, God’s intention for bringing Noah to our attention is to set him before us as an example for us to follow. So what would we need to do to live a life of faith like Noah? Let me point out three qualities that set Noah apart and would set us apart from those around us as well.
- a. First, we must devote ourselves to living righteously to the degree that our faults will be considered insignificant by comparison. Pursuing righteousness to this degree requires a number of things, but surely one of them is making God’s statement “**be holy for I am holy**” our goal rather than making the popular statement “**nobody is perfect**” the place where we settle. And I say this because within the Body of Christ these days it seems more important to make sure we all know God does not expect perfection than to encourage one another to live as nearly perfect as we can.
  - b. Second, we must devote ourselves to pursuing an up close and personal relationship with God so that it can be said of us – we walk with God.
    - (1) Though I have separated these two qualities of Noah’s that we need in order to live in faith like him, the second

quality – pursuing an up close and personal relationship with God – cannot be accomplished without the first – pursuing righteousness in a whole-hearted, whole-life way.

- (2) Let me give you three reasons why I say that ongoing intimacy with God can only be experienced by those who live righteously to the degree that their failures seem insignificant by comparison.
  - (a) In **Matthew 5:8**, Jesus said it is the pure in heart who see God.
  - (b) In **John 14:23**, Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.
  - (c) In any marriage, ongoing and mutually satisfying relational intimacy can only be experienced when both spouses continues to treat each other in ways that endear themselves to each other – which of necessity must include avoiding any thought, or behavior, or habit, or attitude, or any other thing that hurts or frightens or repeatedly frustrates the other spouse. So it is between God and us.
4. There is one other quality in Noah's life that I want to bring to your attention today.
  - a. Noah had to buck the crowd and go it alone. He was the only one in the home where he was raised, in his school, in his workplace, in his neighborhood, in his extended family, in fact, in the world at that time, who believed in God and who, in faith, obeyed God's word.
  - b. Going it alone is not God's preferred way. The fact that Christ left us the Church is proof God's preferred way is that we travel this path with others of like mind and heart and faith.
  - c. Yet we all face situations or settings where we are the only person living by Christian faith – and at such times we can be powerfully tempted to become like those around us rather than continuing to faithfully live the godly way we know to live. When you are feeling alone and being tempted to think and act like the unbelievers around you – remember Noah.
5. I want to conclude our look at **Hebrews 11:7** by reminding you that God is telling us **Noah lived by faith** – a faith that responded in obedience to what God said would happen even though Noah had no empirical proof it would happen.

B. **Hebrews 11:8-10** . . . By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. [9] By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; [10] for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

1. As with Noah, there are qualities and manifestations of faith in Abraham's life that can inspire our faith and teach us to walk by faith more fully than we do.
2. The first thing I want us to notice is that God chose Abraham over everyone else to become the father of a "people or nation of faith". Why?
  - a. I don't know for certain, but I can give you an answer that has to be at least part of the reason God chose him. And the answer is this: up to that time Abraham had been living by faith in a way that showed he could be trusted with greater things.
  - b. Jesus pointed out this principle to his disciples in **Luke 16:10** when he said, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."
3. The second thing to notice is that Abraham recognized the voice of God. Why?
  - a. Because in living by faith he not only obeyed the commands of God in relation to daily life, he also pursued a personal and intimate relationship with God that gave him first hand knowledge of God's voice.
  - b. Because I believe this is an important point, I want to emphasize it by restating it a bit differently:
    - (1) It is right and good to pursue godliness. It is best to pursue godliness **and** a deeply personal relationship with God to the extent that we regularly share intimate communion and ongoing companionship with Him.
    - (2) Now out of concern that you might assume only exceptional people of faith walk with God in this way, let me remind you that the evidence from scripture shows that almost every person of faith named here in **Hebrews 11** interacted with God in ways similar to Abraham, Noah, and Enoch. And let me remind you that **Hebrews 11** is

not about exceptional Christians living an exceptional life of faith but about normal Christians living a normal life of faith. In other words, they are people we can emulate and learn from in order to live a life of faith like them.

- c. What is my point here?
  - (1) Without question, Christian faith produces daily obedience to the will and word of God.
  - (2) But Christian faith is not satisfied with obeying God today or with the hope of seeing God one day. Every Christian who has tasted the sweetness of God's presence and who is looking forward to an eternal face-to-face relationship with God, wants – right here and right now – as much of that promised future intimacy as is possible. In other words, they want to walk with God now.
  - (3) Abraham, Noah, and Enoch had this depth of relationship with God and so can we – for just as they lived by faith and in so doing, walked with God, so can we.
- 4. There is a third truth I want to point out about Abraham. It can appear to the natural or earth-bound mind that Abraham responded to God's call because of the promised inheritance. In other words, we might be inclined to think that Abraham obeyed God to get an earthly and personally enriching blessing from God in this life.
  - a. I don't believe this was Abraham's motive in obeying God's call. The way I read the biblical account, God was Abraham's supreme love and focus – not greater riches or more possessions. This leads me to conclude that Abraham responded out of confidence in God and reverence for God, not out of a desire for personal gain.
  - b. Why do I say this? Let me give you three reasons why I see this to be the case.
    - (1) First, Abraham lived in a secure, comfortable setting and as far as we know was the only heir to his father's wealth.
      - (a) He had no compelling reason to move. In fact, he had many reasons to stay where he was – including the fact that he had a sizable inheritance which would one day be his – adding to what he already possessed.
      - (b) Yet God told Abraham to leave his home, his parents, his extended family, and his homeland and go to an unknown land which God would give him for an

inheritance. In other words, God told Abraham to leave behind what Abraham knew to be valuable for a place he knew nothing about and an inheritance of unknown value.

- (c) And what was Abraham's response? He obeyed God. He packed up his family and his possessions and set out for God's land of promise.
- (2) Second, God only told Abraham He had an inheritance for him – not where it was or what it was like or how it would benefit Abraham once he got it. Besides, Abraham had no map. He had to travel across country much like Israel in the desert – following God's leading moment-by-moment and day-by-day until God said, "You're here." Yet Abraham did this with the confidence that God could be trusted to bring him to a good end.
- (3) Third, when Abraham got to the land where God was taking him, the land was already owned and ruled by others.
  - (a) So Abraham had to find a place to set up his tent and begin to live as a foreigner for the rest of his life in what God said would be his land. In fact, Abraham died without possessing the land God promised him as an inheritance. Yet while he lived, his faith in God and therefore his obedience to God never died.
  - (b) But there is more – Abraham's son, Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob, lived in the land of promise in tents as foreigners just like Abraham. And though Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise God gave Abraham – none of them lived to see God's promise come true. **Yet each of them continued to live by faith in God and His promises of what was to come – as evidenced by their continuing to do God's will and to live righteously.**

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. Let me summarize what is God teaching us about living by faith from Noah's and Abraham's story.
  - 1. Noah took God's promise of coming judgment seriously and did exactly as God said in order to be saved from it. We are wise to follow Noah's example in preparing for the coming judgment.

2. By faith, Noah and Abraham took God at His word and acted accordingly in spite of a lack of evidence to support what God said. To live by Christian faith today means, that regardless of the circumstances, and regardless of what **cannot** be proven true here and now, the Christian is convinced God is perfectly good, His commands are the path to life, obedience is the only rational response, fellowship with Him is a precious treasure, and all His promises will come to fulfillment.
  3. Both Noah's and Abraham's life of faith pleased God. Why?
    - a. Because they devoted themselves to living righteously to the degree that their faults were considered insignificant by comparison.
    - b. And they pursued an up close and personal relationship with God. In other words, they walked with God.
  4. Noah was alone in living by faith and in taking a public stand for God. Yet he was steadfast in his faith, unwavering in his obedience, and unashamed in his public stand.
  5. Neither Noah nor Abraham treated God as a means to get what they wanted. Both humbly served God by doing what He wanted.
  6. Abraham's faith led him to set his heart on the eternal, not the temporal. It compelled him to set his mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. It resulted in his treasuring the heavenly and eternal blessings over whatever earthly blessings he might gain from obeying God here and now.
    - a. You see, Abraham was content to live as a foreigner in the land of promise, and he continued to live by faith in spite of never possessing God's promised inheritance in this life because he was looking for the city which has foundations, and whose architect and builder is God. (**Hebrews 11:10**)
- B. May Abraham's faith and forward look be our faith and forward look. May his treasure – the Heavenly Jerusalem where he would live with God – face-to-face – forever – be our treasure. And may we realize from now until our dying day that the only deterrent to Christian faith is unbelief.