

A believer's preparation for salvation.

Text: Genesis 6:9-22; 7:11-23 for 12/1/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

⁹This is the account about the development of Noah's family. Noah was a righteous man, a man of integrity in that generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹In the sight of God the earth was morally corrupt, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²God looked at the earth and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh was corrupt in all their ways on the earth. ¹³So God said to Noah, "I have decreed the end of all flesh, because the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. ¹⁴"Make an ark of gofer wood. Make rooms in the ark. Seal it inside and outside with pitch. ¹⁵This is how you are to make it: The length of the ark is to be 450 feet, its width 75 feet, and its height 45 feet. ¹⁶Make a roof for the ark, and leave an eighteen-inch opening just under the roof. Place a door on the side of the ark. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷"I myself am about to bring a flood of waters on the earth, in order to destroy all flesh under the sky that has the breath of life. Everything that is on the earth will die, ¹⁸but I will establish my covenant with you. You shall come into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹You shall bring a pair (male and female) of every kind of living flesh into the ark with you to keep them alive. ²⁰Include the birds according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, every creeping thing on the ground according to their kinds. Two of every sort shall come to you, so you can keep them alive. ²¹Take with you every type of food that is eaten, and store it for yourself, so it can be used as food for you and for them." ²²So that is what Noah did. He did everything that God commanded him, just as he had been told. ^{7:11}In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that very day, all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. ¹²The rain came down on the earth for forty days and forty nights. ¹³On that same day Noah, Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons along with them, entered the ark. ¹⁴They went in with every animal according to its kind, all the livestock according to their kinds, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and everything that flies according to its kind, flying birds of every sort. ¹⁵Pairs of all the animals that have the breath of life in them went to Noah in the ark. ¹⁶A male and female of each animal that breathes went in, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut Noah in. ¹⁷The flood kept coming on the earth for forty days. The waters became deeper and lifted up the ark until it floated high above the earth. ¹⁸The water kept increasing and overwhelmed the earth, and the ark was carried along on the surface of the water. ¹⁹The water overwhelmed the earth. All the high mountains that were under the entire sky were covered. ²⁰The waters rose more than twenty feet above the mountains and covered them. ²¹All living creatures that moved on the earth perished, including birds, livestock, wild animals, every creeping thing that crawls on the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything that breathed the breath of life through its nostrils, that is, everything that was on the dry land, died. ²³Every living thing that was on the face of the earth was wiped out, including mankind, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They all were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, as well as those who were with him in the ark.

Advent: it is the season of the Church year that is about making preparations. For

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thousands of year people were preparing for God's promised Savior to come into the world. We, who live after our Savior's first coming, continue to prepare. We prepare for Jesus' second coming on Judgment Day. It has been thousands of years since Jesus performed his saving work in this world. It may be thousands of years from now before he returns. But no one know exactly when Jesus will return. So how do you prepare for an event when you have no idea how long it will be before that event takes place? That is exactly what our Lord is helping to do today as we look at the life of Noah. As we look at this portion of scripture we see ...

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- I. It involves trusting in God's promises,
- II. And then acting on God's commands.

God's salvation has always been based on a promise. As we meet Noah in the book of Genesis God had already made a promise to him. That promise wasn't just for Noah. God had made a promise to all the people of this world, promising to send a Savior to crush Satan's head and to destroy sin's power over the human race. Noah heard that promise from his father, and that promise gave him faith. Noah trusted God's promise and passed that promise on to his own children. Sadly, by the time the promise gets to Noah and his family they are the only ones left who still trust in God's coming Savior.

Yet God did not stop working through his promise. God used that promise to bless and strengthen Noah's faith. We are told that "*Noah was a righteous man, a man of integrity in that generation*" (v. 9). The word our text translates "integrity" is a word that is connected with the idea of something being complete. So another way of translating that verse could be, "Noah was a righteous man, a complete man in that generation." What does it mean that Noah was complete? It means that Noah's righteousness displayed itself completely in his life. Noah was not an on-again, off-again believer. We are told that "**he walked with God**" (v. 6:9). This means he lived his life in a way that made it clear to others he was following the true God; he was trusting God's good promises. So when God told Noah what he needed to do to get ready for the flood he was sending, Noah listened to God. Noah prepared for God's salvation. He lived his life to please God, and it showed; his faith was evident in his life.

God has also made promises to us. He has promised that all who believe and trust in his Son, Jesus will have forgiveness for their sins and will inherit eternal life. Just like Noah, these promises have done their work in our hearts. They enable us to trust God and what he tells us. Our God given faith creates in us the desire to prepare. We are preparing not only to celebrate our Jesus' coming on that first Christmas, we are also getting ready for our Savior's second. Like Noah, we are preparing for salvation.

Yet, as we prepare for Judgment Day, do our lives reflect our trust in God's promises as Noah's life did? Does our faith show itself completely in our lives? Do we "walk with

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God," or are we walking in some other direction? How many times in our lives have we chosen to walk our own way? How many times have we thought or said we were a Christian, yet we used our words to hurt others? How many times have our actions shown our lack of love for others? Have we ever purposely chosen to go walking with the world instead of with God? How many times have we found ourselves agreeing with the worldly philosophy which says the only thing that matters is love, when God says the only thing that matters is hearing and following his word? Our sinful nature tries to get us to "ride the fence," to stand with one foot on God's side and one foot on the world's side. It's hard to walk that way. If we are not fully walking with God, then we are really completely against God. Those who are against God in the end will find themselves walking straight into hell.

To truly "walk with God" we need the full truth of his word. It is a word that both condemns us and saves us. God's law clearly shows us where we have failed in our walk with the Lord, and his gospel clearly shows us the Savior God sent to rescue us from those sins.

God had said to Noah, "**I will establish my covenant with you**" (v. 6:18). God's gospel is the fulfillment of that covenant God made with Noah. God promised the world a Savior, and that Savior was one of Noah's descendants. That descendant is Jesus. God sent his Son into the world on that first Christmas to "walk with God" in our place. Living as our substitute, Jesus' walk of life was the perfect walk God demands from all of us. His sacrificial death was the perfect payment for all those times we chose to walk in some way other than God's way. Now, through faith, Jesus perfect life becomes our perfect life. Christ's righteousness covers our wayward lives. It makes us right again with God. Through his Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us the power to live our lives for God and to walk in his ways. Through faith, like Noah, we are able to make preparations for salvation, by trusting in God's promises.

But as we look again at Noah, we see his faith doing more than trust simply trusting God. We also see Noah acting on God's commands. What God commanded Noah to do was build an ark. God told Noah he was going to destroy the world with a flood. Noah needed to build an ark to hold his family and animals from around the world so that life on earth could continue after the flood. The size of the ark that God told Noah to build was enormous for Noah's time. Using modern measurements the size of the ark would be about as long as a football field and a half, about 75 feet wide, and as tall as a four-story building. This floating barge Noah was to build would have the storage capacity of a million and a half cubic feet! We need to remember that Noah and his family did not have any power tools or diesel-powered cranes. All they had were hand tools, ropes, and maybe some scaffolding. This was a huge undertaking, and it all had to be done by Noah and his three sons. Even with this overwhelming command facing him Noah continues trusting God's promises, and we are told that, "**Noah did everything just as God commanded**

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him" (v. 6:22).

That's pretty amazing. What's amazing is not what Noah did, but the fact that he even tried to do it in the first place. To the rational, sinful, human mind what God asked of Noah sounded crazy, if not almost impossible! And think of all of the social pressure that would have come on Noah and his family as year after year they continued building this massive structure. We can only imagine the ridicule he must have faced from neighbors and relatives. Yet, that didn't stop Noah. He kept working until everything God asked him to do was done. Noah trusted God's promises and that trust moved him to act on God's commands no matter what he had to face.

God has given us commands as well. God gave us his Ten Commandments for our good. He is working to protect us with those commandments. Like Noah, when we follow God's commands, they help to keep our spiritual lives safe.

So how does our faith compare to Noah's? When God commands us to do something do, we do everything he commands? We certainly *know* God's Commandments. Yet just knowing God's commands is not all there is to faith. Faith is a living thing. Faith acts, and faith needs something to act upon. So when God sets his commandments before us, out of gratitude for God's salvation our faith wants to act on those commandments. But do we let it, or do we get in the way of our faith doing what God commands? In his Fourth Commandment God wants us to honor all those he puts in authority over us. Do we show honor and respect to our parents, our teachers, our managers, and our elected officials, or do we find ourselves constantly criticizing them? In his Eighth Commandment God wants us to take the words and actions of others in the kindest possibly way. Do we do that, or are there people for whom we always put the worst construction on their words and actions? In his First Commandment God says we should love him above everyone and everything else. Do we love God that way, or is God near the bottom of the list of those we show love to?

It's hard carrying out God's commands. So how did Noah do it? Certainly not on his own. It was only with God's help that he was able to do everything God commanded of him. The same is true for us. It is only with God's help that our faith has the power to do anything. And that power comes through God's word. God uses his word of law to show us our weaknesses, and then he strengthens those weaknesses with his gospel. In that good news we find our real strength: Jesus, and his righteousness. It was Jesus who perfectly kept every one of God's Commandments, never deviating from them in the slightest. It was Jesus who perfectly followed his Father's will, even when it meant giving up his own perfect life to save our imperfect lives.

Christ is the source of our strength when it comes to doing what God commands. It is Jesus who brings us forgiveness for the times we fail to keep God's commandments. It is Jesus who gives us the ability to carry out God's will as we strive to do everything God commands of us. Only in Christ are we able to prepare for God's final salvation on

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Judgment Day because it's Jesus who gives us the ability to act on God's commands. This is why we need to keep gathering for worship, taking the Lord's Supper, and daily reading God's word. It is only in connection with God's word and sacrament that our faith has the strength and power to do what God asks of us.

Making preparations for God's final salvation can be a struggle for us. We don't know when Jesus will return, so we always have to be ready. That can be tough with all of the temptations we face in this world. When we feel frustration in the face of those temptations let's remember Noah as he was preparing for salvation. Like Noah, let's keep trusting in God's promises. Like Noah, let's keep showing God our gratitude by acting on his commands. Then, let us keep looking ahead to that day of salvation with joy because we know when that day comes, we will be ready because of Christ. We will be ready to meet our Lord and praise him eternally for his saving goodness toward us. Amen.