

Living by Faith

Lesson 3: Faith That Obeys the Unseen: Noah -- Hebrews 11:7

Imagine a man pounding nails into a wooden beam under a clear, dry sky. The sun is warm. Birds are singing. There has never been a flood, and the ground beneath his feet has never seen rain like the kind God has described. His neighbors slow down as they pass, and a few of them laugh out loud. A boat? Out here, miles from any sea? For what? And Noah, sweat on his brow and a saw in his hand, keeps building. He cannot see the thing he is preparing for. He has only one reason to keep going, and it is enough: God said it would come.

Hebrews 11:7 puts the whole story into a single, weighty sentence. 'By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.' Notice how much is packed in there. A warning about something not yet seen. A holy fear of God. A long, costly act of obedience. A household saved. A world condemned. And a man counted righteous by faith. Few verses in Scripture carry that much freight.

Most of us know what it is to be asked to trust God before we can see how things will turn out. We make the obedient choice, and the results are nowhere in sight. We forgive, and nothing seems to change. We give, and the bank account does not magically refill. We hold to purity, and the world keeps insisting we are fools for it. Noah lived in that exact place, only stretched across years, with a hammer in his hand and a crowd of mockers at his back. His faith was not a feeling that came and went. It was a daily obedience to a God he trusted more than he trusted his own eyes.

This lesson invites us to stand beside Noah and watch what real faith does. It does not merely believe that God exists; it takes God at His word and acts. It does not wait for proof before it obeys; it obeys because God has spoken, and that settles it. As we study, we will see that the same obedient faith that built an ark still saves households today, and that the God who warned the world in Noah's day still calls us to take His word with deadly seriousness and to respond before the storm arrives.

Group Discussion: Noah spent years obeying God for a flood no one could see and no one believed in. When have you found it hardest to keep obeying God when the people around you saw no reason for it, and what kept you going?

Personal Reflection: Is there a clear command of God that you have been slow to obey because you cannot yet see why it matters or how it will turn out? What would it look like to trust Him and act this week?

Read Hebrews 11:7

Study Questions

1. Hebrews 11:7 says Noah was 'warned by God concerning events as yet unseen.' What does it tell us about the nature of faith that Noah acted on a warning about something he could not see, and how does this fit the definition of faith we met in Hebrews 11:1?
2. Think about how you respond when God's word warns you about something you cannot yet see, such as the consequences of sin or the certainty of judgment. Do you tend to take those warnings as seriously as Noah took his? Why or why not?
3. The verse says Noah acted 'in reverent fear.' What is the difference between a cringing, terrified dread of God and the reverent fear that moved Noah to obey, and why is this kind of fear a healthy root of faith (compare Proverbs 1:7; Hebrews 12:28)?
4. Where in your own walk do you sense that a deeper reverence for God, a healthy fear of Him, would change the way you live or the choices you make?
5. Genesis 6:22 says, 'Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.' Why is it significant that Scripture stresses Noah did all that God commanded, and what does this teach us about the kind of faith that pleases God (compare John 14:15; Matthew 7:21)?

6. Are there areas where you tend to obey God selectively, keeping the commands that are convenient while quietly setting aside the ones that are costly or unpopular? What might full obedience look like there?
7. Building the ark took many years, and Noah is called 'a herald of righteousness' who kept working and warning while the world ignored him (2 Peter 2:5). What does Noah teach us about persevering in long obedience when results are not visible and the surrounding culture is hostile?
8. When you face ridicule or feel out of step with the people around you because of your faith, how does that pressure affect your obedience to God? What helps you stand firm?
9. Peter says that in the days of Noah, eight persons were 'brought safely through water,' and then he writes, 'Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 3:20–21). Just as Noah's obedient faith led him to act and his household was saved through water, how does Scripture connect saving faith with baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Mark 16:16), and how does this guard us against the idea that we are saved by faith only, apart from obeying the gospel?
10. Looking back over Hebrews 11:7 as a whole, where is God calling you to act on His word before you can see the outcome, the way Noah did? Name one concrete step of obedient faith, and one way Jesus is forming you to trust and obey Him.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 6:13–22, the account of God’s command and Noah’s complete obedience in building the ark; 2 Peter 2:5, Noah as a herald of righteousness preserved while the ungodly world perished; 1 Peter 3:20–21, the saving through water in Noah’s day as a figure of baptism that now saves us; Matthew 24:37–39, Jesus pointing to the days of Noah as a warning about the coming day of judgment; Hebrews 5:9, Christ as the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.