

Bethel Christian Church  
*In God Alone*

**Noah:** Preacher of Righteousness, Father of Sorrow

How can a man who seemed so easily led astray to the booze, who raised a son who derided and mocked him, and who in turn brought down terrible judgement upon his son, be described by God as “A preacher of righteousness” a “blameless man”? Was this a description of his good and holy times? It appears not to be. Does this mean that God was casual about the term righteousness, casual about Noah’s behaviour?

Apparently not if we consider Paul:

*<sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—<sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,<sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

Romans 3:21-25

So again we are confronted by God’s indescribable action of justifying the ungodly.

*But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:5).*

We are so deeply saturated in our flesh by the notion of merit and ‘doing’ something right for God to bless us that justification of the ungodly is super offensive. God has much to tell us of the grace of his holy love through Noah.

**Where did it all start for Noah.**

Where does God direct our eyes as he makes Noah into a herald of the way of righteousness to us this morning? It all begins with a BUT: A but which separated him from eternal judgement and death and established him within God’s covenant promises.

The whole world in which Noah lived was against God, his law of love, his creation and each other. But Noah had been the recipient of grace. He “*Found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*” Now if we equate the ‘eyes of the Lord’ with his immediacy and the revelation of his love then we understand this verse to mean that God had visited Noah and graced him with the knowledge that he was acceptable and righteous. When Noah trusted this as the definitive word about who he was and what he was about he became a preacher, announcer of the Gospel of God.

The creation and world in which Noah and his generation lived, despite being oppressed by evil in every part still beat out the message of God’s goodness and love. (See Romans 1). Noah’s fellow humans spent much time suppressing the truth of God with continual lies, compounding their evil.

So in that context Noah had been ‘preserved’ to see that and respond joyfully to the truth.

Grace did not come to Noah because of anything in Noah. Noah had not been looking for grace or working towards grace like some spiritual child prodigy. Through the sovereign unconditional election of God the God of Grace found Noah.

Then for five hundred years, Noah proclaimed in word and deed that God was holy faithful and good. Through all the down-slide into rebellion going on around Noah he and his family stood apart. Like Abel before him this must have aroused enormous hatred and irrational behaviour. God preserved him.

### **Noah was preserved in a communion with God**

*These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. **Noah walked with God.** (Genesis 6:9)*

To walk with God was to enjoy the privilege of Eden outside Eden. There was never a moment when Noah was not held in the strong, present embrace of God. The ark then was not some big boat full of noisy, smelly animals. It must have been symbolic of the past sanctuary of Eden the presence of God with saving passion.

Sometimes I'm sure Noah would just like to have gone with the crowd. It's not easy being green when every one else is not green (Just ask Kermit). At those moments the presence of God and the message of grace filling Noah was so important. We cannot endure isolation and scorn from our peers for a second if our primary sense of who we are derives from them. No amount of positive self talk can establish us in such a scene. If we will not have God tell us who we are and where we belong then we must suffer the curse of living in what seems like a fatherless world.

### **The real confrontation for Noah's Trust**

Would Noah continue to trust in God in the presence of everything around him screaming, "Useless!" "Irrelevant!" "Pointless!" Noah built the Ark for one hundred years. One hundred dry years. Imagine the people's response. Imagine how easily they could dismiss the word Noah brought them. Any notion of God's impending judgement seemed as unlikely as Noah's stupid boat ever getting wet let alone float. To the people around Noah the ark represented the easily ridiculed idea that God was in control and going to judge the world by flood.

Plank by plank, year by year Noah declared that God was righteous (his word was true). Deck by deck and decade by decade the ark became more of an idiotic thing in the eyes of Noah's friends. What was it that drew Noah on in obedience thro all this? What was it that enabled him to declare the un-declarable, "God has spoken to me and told me that the end of everything we know is near?"

The simple trust produced by grace, that everything God said was true.

*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.** Hebrews 11:7*

Reverent fear is a healthy awe that sees oneself in the correct light, a servant and creature of God.

Every plank he built by faith condemned the world. It showed them their indifference to the God who had spoken and was speaking. It hardened their hearts and increased their anger and multiplied their rebellion.

But for Noah, every plank laid designated him as an heir of righteousness that comes by trust.

So when the day of unleashing the water came Noah was safe in the sanctuary God had provided by his word. As Noah saw something of God's holy love stretched out in wrath the enormity of the grace in the Ark must have overwhelmed him. His preaching to his family must have taken wings every time he heard the wash of the flood under his sanctuary. It would seem to the legal spirited that his family would have been swept up into perfect trust along with Noah. God had vindicated their husband and father. He was the great and righteous preacher. They could follow him.

How soon as believers will we understand that we never leave Romans 7. In this life we find sin of itself to be stronger than we are of ourselves. In this life we will always cry, "Who will set me free from this body of death". In this life, like Paul himself we will always find ourselves crying, "The good I wish I do not do; but I practice the evil that I do not wish!"

**We now come to a solemn reminder that Noah, a preacher of righteousness was a sinner still.**

The event of Noah's drunkenness is both sad and amazing. Sad for we see Noah's clay feet. Amazing for it does not disqualify him from God's blessing of being accounted as righteous. If our salvation is not by grace alone then every indwelling sin, every moment of weakness would disengage us from being called righteous. Does that mean Noah sinned with a high hand. I don't think so. Is his sin excusable, never. We will see that Noah's heart was strong in the grace and holiness of the Lord at the sad end of his failure.

We consider briefly the sad and sordid event. The water had subsided. The judgement of God was over. The grace of their position was strong to all. On top of this God restated his covenant blessing upon the family. Theirs was grace upon grace upon grace. So it was in this grace that Noah settled, worshipped God and built a vineyard. Then one day Noah got drunk and lay exposed. One son, Ham, saw him and mockingly derided his father before his brothers. The other brothers gave honour and respect to their father and covered his exposure. Then Noah sobered up to the huge issue of how a righteous man deals with moral failure. We are not told what went through Noah's heart and the nature of how he repented. What we do know is that he must have received the grace of God's forgiveness for Moses records Noah's response to Ham's abuse as prophesy. Noah's response was very far from the angry reaction of a morose but sober drunkard. God gave him terrible words, family dividing words that remain true up to this day. Words which must have cut Noah to the core. Words which in the face of all the grace God had showered on his family must have seemed so sad. Canaan, Ham's son bore a curse. The people who would be born from him and called Canaanites would be a people under great bondage. So it was that Jesus found them.

**So Noah becomes God's testimony to us**

- The grace God shower upon us will create in us a heart to do his will (even if that looks totally at odds with the world)

- Grace bears us to obedience which brings the fruit of life within the sanctuary God.
- By God making us righteous before Him as a gift, our indwelling sin cannot disqualify us from his mercy and blessed hope.
- Our indwelling sin may have deep and lasting effects in our family, particularly if they remain in rebellion against grace. Even in this the sovereign purposes of God are being worked out.
- God's ministers may only ever direct the world to Jesus Christ. He alone takes away the guilt of our sin. He, not us as his blessed one must be the focus of our words and testimony.