

A 2014 article in *The Wall Street Journal* asks, "Why work out when you can just buy the clothes and look like you did?" ... The article explores a growing trend in the athletic apparel market—people are buying sports clothing without actually practicing the sport. The article notes:

"The U.S. athletic apparel market will increase by nearly 50 percent to more than \$100 billion at retail by 2020, driven in large part by consumers snapping up stretchy tees and leggings that will never see the fluorescent lights of a gym. For instance, sales of yoga apparel increased by 45 percent but yoga participation grew by less than five percent. Retailers are also rolling out jogging pants and preppy, \$90 men's running shorts for men who may never jog."

The trend isn't limited to athletic wear. The author goes on to point out that outdoor and camping retailers have debuted new lines of hiking boots and flannel shirts for people who probably have no intention of actually hiking and camping.

(OK... wait a minute while I try to put a shocked expression on my face)... Whaaaaaat?!!! Outrageous isn't it...? I can't imagine anything more hypocritical...!!! If you wear the clothing of a camper... you better make them wreek with smoke from a campfire! And if you put on the apparel of someone who goes to the gym... then you better soak them with your own sweat.

The author of this article has a bias which says... "*only people who work out should buy athletic apparel... and only those who go camping should wear flannel shirts and hiking boots.*" But ***is*** this a clearly accepted social

law of our culture...? Although the author might think it is taboo to buy comfortable clothing for purposes other than what they are advertised for... I am not sure that I see it the same way. ... (Perhaps I am missing something...) But I am not dismayed - at all - by this apparent hypocrisy. I am un-moved by the matter of this article's rant. "Soooooo...?"

How unfortunate it is... however... that there is another kind of hypocrisy... much more serious... and people... (even believers in the church)... are un-moved by it. They give an apathetic "so...?" to a more troubling kind of hypocrisy.

Folks... it is dangerous hypocrisy to think that a faith that saves... is easy-believism. ... "*Here... pray this simple prayer... and nothing else is required of you...*" ... No... we don't have to work for our salvation... we cannot earn it. We receive it by faith. It is given to us by grace (which means un-merited favor.) It is a free gift. ... But for every person who God saves through faith... there are some demands from God... which a lot of people who claim they are saved... don't ever consider.

There will always be outward evidence... if a person believes in God. You cannot say that you have faith in Christ... if you don't dedicate yourself to follow Him. Saying that you believe... but not acting on that belief... is hypocrisy far more dangerous... than wearing clothes that are meant for activities that you are not doing...

"Faith's demand for action"... is the subject of our great passage of Scripture today... which gives the account of Noah and the Ark. If I had to pick a title for this message... I'd be torn between... "God's Great Demand from Our Faith" ... and ... "What Noah Had to Believe." (You see)... the

things God called upon Noah to believe - are unbelievable... yet Noah did believe what God said... accepted God's Word... and did what God commanded.

(Now here is a Bible reading tip)... In an epic Biblical account... such as Noah and the flood... it is the repetitions of a certain phrase... that clearly conveys the author's message. If you want to know what the big idea of a passage is... and you notice that a phrase reoccurs over and over... you can be fairly certain that you have discovered the main principle of that passage. ... And we such evidence here! It is: "*Noah did all that God commanded him.*" It first appears in Genesis 6:22... then (with similar wording) in Genesis 7:5... 7:9... and 7:16.

So... in hopes that we might capture the main idea that God has for us in this passage... we will focus on the two ideas of "God's Great Demand from Our Faith" ... and ... "What Noah Had to Believe."

Noah lived in troublesome times... probably the most troublesome times in human history. ... God created man to fellowship with him. That was (and still is)... His purpose for you and I. He wants an intimate relationship... one that we have already seen described... and will see described again today... as a walk with Him. ... But man has... for the most part thumbed his nose at his creator... and said... "*God! You go Your way... and I'll go mine. Leave me alone!*"

When Adam and Eve first rejected God... He responded with judgment and a lot of love and mercy. Being a just God... He could no longer have the

intimate fellowship with man... for which He created man. So... God said... I have a plan. Right there in the Garden of Eden... God promised to send a deliverer... sometime in the future. The deliverer would restore man to a proper relationship with Him.

But the violent reactions against God continued. In fact... they got worse. Man had become corrupt and wicked. ... There was not a godly person left upon earth.

God had no choice. ... He had promised that *a godly line of believers* would always be upon earth... *a godly line* through whom He could send the Savior to the world. But now... as we saw in last week's passage... the godly line had blended into the ungodly line. ... Therefore... man had to be wiped off the earth... and a new beginning had to be made. ... But how? How could God wipe mankind off the earth... and still fulfill His promise to save man? ... There was only one way: by choosing one man and his family... and saving them through the destruction of the earth. That man was Noah.

God always has His special man — a Moses... an Elijah... a Daniel. ... Before the Flood He had Noah. ... With the world crumbling around him... Noah stood like a lonely monolith pointing to the sky. Noah was a man *energized by God* (6:8-10). From age to age God raises up those unique... specially chosen vessels of His... men endowed with special power from on high.

The divine energy imparted to Noah manifested itself in several ways. First, he was *forgiven*. He "found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Genesis 6:8

says that Noah found חֵן in the eyes of the Lord. חֵן means “grace” or “favor”. Notice... that before there is any mention of Noah’s blamelessness (in verse 9)... we are told that Noah received unmerited favor (in verse 8). He had a standing before God that he did not earn. He was made righteous... because of the overflowing grace of God.

Genesis 6:8-9

This is the first time the word "righteous" is used in the Bible... (Do you know what it means?) ... Most people don't. They assume that “righteousness” refers to good works that others see. But it doesn't. Righteousness describes our standing before God. It is how God sees us.

Once we know this... then we can understand that Noah's righteousness standing before God did not come from his good works. But rather... his good works came because of his gifted and undeserved righteous standing before God. ...

Just like Abraham... Noah’s righteousness was God's gift... in response to his belief. Both Abraham and Noah believed God's Word "and it was counted to [them] for righteousness." (How do we know this? Am I just supposing that Noah and Abraham first believed... and then they were gifted with righteousness...? No. Scripture puts it this way. Here is what Genesis 15 says about Abraham...

Genesis 15:6 (ESV)

And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And this is what Scripture says about Noah...

Hebrews 11:7 (ESV)

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.

So... here is the apparent order: Noah believed God... then God forgave Noah... and chose to see Noah as a righteous person... and then Noah did good works... which made him blameless.

Now what does "blameless" mean? If "righteous" describes Noah's standing before **God**... then "blameless" describes his conduct before **people**.

"Blameless" doesn't mean "sinless"... because nobody but Jesus Christ ever lived a sinless life on this earth. ... Noah was blameless in the sense of "having integrity... being whole... and unblemished." ... Noah's conduct was such that his neighbors couldn't find fault with him. And notice the whole phrase "*blameless in his generation.*" Blameless (here) is described in a comparative sense. Against such an (already defined) evil generation... Noah was blameless. (Blameless in the sphere of his generation.)

The person who is right before God (through faith in Christ) ought to lead a life that has integrity... is wholesome... and stands out... in stark contrast to the generation that surrounds them. How sad... that we see too many Christians who want to identify with... and live as close to the world... as they possibly can. They simply don't have the kind of belief that leads to distinctive godly behavior.

Noah's belief and obedience is summarized (in verse 9) as a walk. Noah walked with God.

As with Enoch... there is no description of how Noah performed his walking with God. ... (What were the spiritual disciplines that he practiced every day...? Exactly how did he pray? Did he lay himself out flat...? Drop to his knees...? What words did he use? What forms of worship did he employ? How often...?) We are simply told that Enoch and Noah walked with God.

But now... however... we are given a clue (a few verses down) that helps us formulate some understanding of the nature of Noah's walk. Verse 12 - *And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.* Noah... who 'found grace in the eyes of the Lord'... conducted his life in a way that did not corrupt the way of God. Thus, a 'walk with God' involves the absence of corrupting God's way.

So... it means a total submission to God's will. Remember: in order to walk with Him we have to go in the same direction... (His direction.) ... But to corrupt the way of God is to go through life making your decisions by always asking "*What's best for me?*" Choices are never made on the basis of where God is leading.

How many decisions do you make on any given day... when you didn't even think about where God is... and hear Him asking you to join Him? You make thousands of decisions every day... and face numerous challenges that can go terribly wrong. Are you walking alone through them? Are you basing most of your decisions on "*What is best for me?*" Or

do you think beyond yourself in an attitude of “*God... where are You on this... because that is where I want to be...*” There more consistently we do this... the more truth there is... when we say that we are walking with God. ... A 'walk with God' involves the absence of corrupting God's way. (A primary thing about God's way... is that He wants to have intimate fellowship with you.) Walk with Him all through the day – every day. Include Him in your thought-life. Recognize that He knows your every thought... Make every thought obedient to His will. Submit to the direction He wants to go.

Genesis 6:10

This is the second time the three sons are named. They are important for from them the entire world was repopulated after the flood. We are all related to at least one of the sons of Noah. They are part of the development of the history of Noah.

Genesis 6:11-13

As bad as our world is today... this cannot be said of it. It is true that every aspect of our personalities is tainted with sin. ... But it is **not** true that "every intention" of the thoughts of every man's and every woman's heart are "only evil continually" — at least not yet. But we sure seem close... don't we...?

This week we saw that our United States House of Representatives did not have enough legislators... who know that it is wrong to leave babies to die after birth... to make it illegal. ... New York legislators gleefully cheered when they recently passed their legislation for it to be legal to kill a child in

it's mother's womb all the way to its birth. Standing on a biblical conviction that Marriage is only between one man and one woman... is now a hate crime. We could go on and on... But things were worse in Noah's day. **Every** forming... and **every** purposing of their thoughts (as the Hebrew stresses) was evil **all** the time.

Genesis 6:14-16

Telling Noah about the coming judgment was a fascinating prophecy. But right after informing Noah of the coming judgment... God gave Noah some work to do. It involved the construction of the famous ark. ... (You know) Prophetic announcements never come to us apart from understandings of what we are to do... or how we are to act in view of the prophecy. Too many folk are a lot more interested in prophetic details than in prophetic duty. ... You want to study the book of Revelation...? Great! But make sure it changes the way you live!

The plans for the ark meant Noah was going to have to do a lot of hard work to complete his assignment. ... (LISTEN!)... True belief in God is not for the lazy and the sluggards. ... If you are looking for an easy job... you are not properly evaluating what a belief in God actually is.

Scripture does not tell us about the scorn that Noah was sure to receive... But it does not have to tell us about the scorn for us to realize that scorn was present for Noah... in constructing the ark. Picture yourself working 150 years... building a boat the length of one and a half football fields and as high as a four-story building.

Noah was building a boat for a flood which had never occurred before. He was building it on dry land. ... And Noah was different than everyone else. He wasn't like them. He was blameless... and they weren't. Adding this to the dislike of Noah would be his preaching... for he was a *"preacher of righteousness"* (according to 2 Peter 2:5.) No one repented. All of their thoughts were evil all the time. ... He would be the butt of every joke... *"How man sons of Noah does it take to hammer a nail into a board...? Three... one to hold the hammer and nail... and two to pound the board with it..."* Drunkards would laugh and howl and call the ark "Noah's folly."

Doing God's bidding does not gain much praise from the world. You will get more bricks thrown at you than bouquets... when doing God's work.

Things haven't changed much since Noah's day. We might warn those around us about God's inevitable judgment... yet most of them don't really believe it will happen. ... Don't expect people to welcome or accept your message of God's coming judgment on sin. Those who don't believe in God will deny his judgment and try to get you to deny God as well.

God gave Noah instructions for survival. He needed to follow them precisely... because his family's lives depended upon it. The wrong wood or dimensions alone could spell disaster. (Most of the problems we are plagued with today are a result of not following instructions. Guys...(?) How many times have we tried to assemble something... only to get stuck because we did not read the directions...? I've been told that this sometimes happens – to some of you others...)

The boat was exactly six times longer than it was wide—the same ratio used by modern shipbuilders. ... The computations of the cubic space of

the ark indicate there was plenty of room for the animals... approximately 520 railroad livestock cars could fit into it. ... Scholars have estimated that almost 45,000 animals could have fit into the boat. ... And these were probably not fully grown animals... yet. Perhaps they were baby rhinos... and elephants...

God's dimensions were to not have the side walls go all the way to the roof. He was to leave a one cubit slit... a window... made in the side of the ark.... all the way around it. ... Have you ever stopped to think about the stench that there might be with all those animals in there over that period of time? The roof must have overlapped the window quite a bit. That is the way they used to ventilate school gymnasiums... and livestock buildings at the county fair. I have noticed... and perhaps you have too... that buildings in which animals are housed for public showing... have that type of a window which goes all the way around at the top. (With all the animals they keep there... it would not otherwise be a pleasant place to visit – I don't care how much you like pigs... and cows... and sheep.) But you will see all the 4-H kids sitting in there eating their meals and also sleeping. I guess it is somewhat comfortable... and the odor is not bad. But how practical for God to design it this way for Noah and his family.

Genesis 6:18

The only thing that Noah had to sustain him... for 150 years... was the bare word of God... God's prophecy... God's specific instructions... and God's promise that he would make a future covenant with Noah.

God's word is what sustains you and I... as well. But our advantage is incomparable to what Noah had. We have the whole Body of God's Word in Scripture. We have thousands of years of testimony and verifiable prophecy that God has fulfilled! ... How much greater than should our obedience be...?

Genesis 6:19-22

Noah obeyed completely. He did everything God told him to do. He did not cut corners or change anything to make it easier for himself. *Noah did this; He did all that was given him to do.* ... There is a strong emphasis here on the excellence of Noah's compliance. (And as I said at the beginning this will be repeated a few more times. Obedience is to be our take-away from the passage.)

It wasn't easy for Noah and his family to obey the Lord... because the rest of the population was disobeying God and rebelling against His will. ... You know... we are left without any excuse (that we cannot be expected to obey so thoroughly)... because we live in tougher times. We don't! We cannot excuse our character failures on our culture... or the time that we live in.

We hear a great deal today about "peer pressure." ... Whether it has to do with sexual abstinence... using alcohol and drugs... or joining gangs and breaking the law... there seems to be a ready excuse for all kinds of illegal and immoral behavior... from cheating on your income tax... to cheating on your spouse. ... But **anybody** who has ever developed godly character has had to fight against peer pressure. Noah shows us that it can be done... by walking with the Lord.

Genesis 7:1

Wow! We are really beginning to see the priority that God places on conduct. *"I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation."* It is the main achievement in which God is interested. Man puts emphasis on making money... hitting home runs... scoring touchdowns... being famous. But God puts the emphasis on holy living. And where does that begin? It begins with our believing.

I would like for you to notice that it had not yet begun to rain. Noah was still acting by faith. All he had... was what we have: God's Word and the warning of judgment to come. He had nothing else other than God's Word. He had built the ark with nothing other than God's Word to go on... and now... he enters the ark with nothing but God's Word to go on. Not a drop of rain had yet fallen - nothing had yet happened to indicate that judgment was about to fall upon the earth. God had Noah and his family go and stay in the ark seven days before a single drop of water fell. God alone had spoken to Noah... and Noah had acted on God's Word alone.

Learning to trust God whether or not there is a shred of evidence is something we all need to learn. Some of you are facing incredible hardship in your life... and all you have is God's promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you. You don't see any light at all in the dark tunnel you are in. But you know God will provide in His perfect timing. We are facing this collectively as a church right now. God has us in a waiting pattern... stay obedient to Him... and wait for Him to work.

I am not afraid to tell you that such thoughts about this passage today... brought some joyful tears to my eyes. ... Sometimes God tests our faith.

God tells us to do something and we obey—but then for a period of time we see no results and others observe and mock... even those close to us often begin to question us about our actions. Submission may involve waiting patiently in the ark a few days before the rain begins.

Genesis 7:2

In chapter six... the number of animals given was two of each kind. But an addition is now made that seven of every clean animal is to be included. Only two of every unclean animal... but seven of the clean. This was perhaps to provide for sacrifice... and maybe extra food once the ark landed and God allowed the eating of meat (as Genesis 9:2-3 says.) They would not have been able to eat any meat of any kind... without wiping the entire species out... if there was only two of every kind. Just one happy meal and there would be no cows to re-populate the earth.

The distinction between clean and unclean animals was not an innovation that was first given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Noah had some revelation about it. Acceptable sacrificing was known long before the Law of Moses.

Genesis 6:3-5

Noah obeyed all of God's commands. He did not pick and choose what he would and would not obey. Nor did he modify the commands to make it easier for himself.

Genesis 6:6-9

So now we begin to see what it means to be righteous. The righteous person rests everything on the bare word of God and obeys it. We also

glimpse what it means to walk with God, because to walk with him is not a stroll. It means to go the same way in obedience—even as the culture marches the other way. What is the person God saves like? He believes in God's promise to him, and it is counted as righteousness. As a righteous man he lives not a perfect but a blameless life. He walks with God. And everything about him is covered by obedience to God's perfect word.

We marvel at the unbelief of people in Noah's day. But they were no different from the people of our day. Look at the unbelief of our world. Few believe; most disbelieve. In fact, many people even deny that the great flood ever took place. Many persons do not believe that God ever destroyed the earth. But they are wrong. God did. And the great tragedy is this: God is going to be forced to destroy the earth again.

People are still rejecting God, even cursing and denying Him. Just think of the times throughout the day when God's name is cursed. Think of the people who deny and reject God. Just think how few people we know who really believe and follow God... who really live for Him. This is the reason God declares that judgment is to once again fall upon the earth. In fact, God declares that both the earth and the heavens—the whole universe—will soon be judged and destroyed. But this time... it will be final.

God is going to stop human history as it now exists: sinful... evil... and imperfect. God declares that He is going to remake the earth and the heavens... recreate them in perfection. Notice how clearly God declares this:

2 Peter 3:3-13 (ESV)

³ *knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.* ⁴ *They will say, "Where is*

the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Do you believe this...? Remember: there will always be outward evidence... when a person believes the word of God. Saying that you believe... but not **acting** on that belief... is a dangerous hypocrisy.

“Faith demands your action”