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SERIES: Choosing Faith Over Fear

Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/Arnie & Cara)

Title: Drowning Fear, Rising Hope Pt. 1 (Noah)

I'm not sure what profession you're in, or maybe were in, but what if God called you to stop what you're doing, and change direction 100 percent? He calls you to go from one thing and move to another you know nothing about. For example, today you're a doctor, but tomorrow He called you to be a mechanic. Or today you're an elementary teacher, but tomorrow you're called to be a nuclear physicist. Or maybe you're a stay at home mom, but tomorrow you're called to lead a country. What would your reaction be? Would it be obedience and faith, or doubt and stubbornness? What should our reaction be? We'll find out as we look at another Biblical character who had the choice of faith or fear. That person is Noah.

Noah is an amazing person of faith. But again, he wasn't superhuman. He was just a guy who had faith in God. Just like us today. But his choice of faith or fear was unlike any other. Let's find out why beginning in Genesis 6:9.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark... (ESV, Gen. 6:9-13)

Now, if you were paying attention to what I just read, you probably want to correct me. I said that there was nothing special about Noah. He was just like you and me. But the text says that Noah was righteous and blameless in his generation. That sounds like perfect. Was Noah that great, or what's the real story?

Noah was righteous before God because of his faith in God. This is the first time you see the word “righteous” in the Bible. His righteousness, or right standing, before God wasn’t because of his good works. His good works were the results of his righteousness before God.

In the Bible’s Faith Hall of Fame, Hebrews 11:7 says, “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.” The same faith that saves us saved Noah, Abraham, Rahab, and those before the coming of Christ.

It is only through the righteousness of Christ, do we become righteous before Christ. 2 Corinthians confirms this. Paul wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)”

It’s no different than you and me today. In order for us to experience salvation – that righteousness of God - we must turn from our sin, and turn to Christ by grace, through faith alone.

So by God’s grace and by Noah’s faith, he is declared righteous. But he’s also declared “blameless” in his generation. This does not mean he was sinless. He was not a perfect man. But what it means is that how he lived *with* and *in front* of people was full of integrity.

I love what author and apologist Ravi Zacharias said about integrity. He said, “Integrity is such an admirable quality, that even your enemies will trust you if they know you’re a man of integrity.” Noah was a man of integrity. He lived in a fallen, ugly, pagan culture. They were hostile in mind and lives toward God. That’s why God is calling on Noah. Genesis 6:5 says, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

So what did God do? He called on Noah, because he was different. He had faith in God. He lived life with integrity, amongst all the sin and offensiveness to God. So God tells Noah to build an ark.

And though it doesn’t capture this in the text, I can bet with almost 100% certainty, Noah said, “What’s an ark?”

It’s as if God pulled him from one job or vocation, and is telling him to do something that he’s never heard of, and something that’s never existed. It’s like God told you one day to stop what

you're doing, and create a moss-covered three-handled family credenza. There is no such thing, but you've been asked by God to create it. Unbelievable.

DISCUSSION:

N: All right, I want to invite my discussion partner, Arnie Cole, to join me at this point. Arnie, how are you doing?

A: Doing great. How are you doing Nat?

N: I'm doing fantastic. And we lost our other discussion partner today, Cara Whitney, and she is on vacation that she deserves, and I hope she's having a great time. So you and I are just going to get into it. We're going to have a fun discussion today about the story of Noah. So my question for you is this Arnie, what do you think of God's assessment of the world? Because I look around me today, and I'm thinking to myself, how could the world really have been worse off than it is today?

A: Yeah, it's crazy to think about some of those things. I just have to give it up to God, you know, because it does seem like the world is much worse, especially with all the modern conveniences we can get into trouble with. I just wonder the fury that He could possess. It's scary.

N: And we don't know exactly how many people were alive at this time. But you think about in the story of Noah, how few people that God would call to get on that ark, Noah and his family; that's not a great percentage of people who are following God. In fact, it's very few. So you look at maybe the comparison today, you know, thinking about the amount of believers worldwide. So it is a different world and evil is prevalent, but I think that God is on the move in mighty ways, because of Noah's obedience.

A: Here in Genesis 6:6, it says that *the Lord regretted that he made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart*. What exactly does that mean? I mean, grieved His heart. That's like He made a mistake.

N: Yeah, this is a common question, and the simple answer is, I have no idea. [Oh, come on, come on.] No, I'm just kidding. Yeah, no, no, what's this passage saying? It's saying God looked out at His Creation and it made Him sad. I mean, think about it. I mean, for those of us who are listening today, and you have children, and maybe there's some issue between you and your child; that's got to break your heart, and it's got to make you mourn. I've got young boys, and

when I tell them to do something for their good, for their protection, and they do the exact opposite while looking at me, it breaks my heart. This has nothing to do with God being shocked. God is all knowing. He's omnipotent. So this didn't catch him off guard at all, but the reality is, it made him sad. It grieved him, and think about it. What's going to happen in the story? Well, they're going to pay a price for their disobedience. I mean, what parent, what creator would not be sad when his creation is broken? That's what it's saying here.

A: But didn't God see it coming?

N: Absolutely He did. There is no doubt in my mind, and from what's taught in Scripture, that God has all knowledge. But there's a position out there that would teach that God has limited knowledge, that He sees history progress as it goes by, and that's when His knowledge increases. Well, the reality is, if that's true, then God really isn't as strong, or as powerful, or as great as we think He is. Then He is a lot like us, and the reality is, God is not like us. Yes, we are made in His image; however God, to be God, has to be unlike us, and part of that comes down to His power, and to His ability to see all things at all times.

Now there's a wide variety of viewpoints on God's knowledge and how it works, but again, if you look at Scripture as a whole, you can say, no, no, God knows exactly what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, and nothing catches Him off guard.

All right, Arnie, I want to put this back on you for a second, and ask you about God's recognition of Noah's integrity in the face of such wickedness. I mean, it's honestly a blueprint for our own lives. Don't you think? I mean that our lives are supposed to reflect the righteousness of God, regardless of what's going on around us.

A: Oh, for sure. It just seems so amazing that Noah – talk about perseverance, talk about being harassed to the point of being humiliated - and yet he followed the plan that God laid out for him to the tee. I mean, it's just absolutely amazing.

N: Yeah. You think about what, I would call him a hardy person, a person who can face such resistance, and yet stay faithful. And the Bible, in this story about Noah, keeps saying, and Noah did it. I mean, there's no debate. There's no wrestling. No, he just did it. And I think that's such a great example for us today. So I think our listeners would like to know - honestly, I would like to know - what's the biggest act of faith that God has asked you to do? I mean, has God ever asked you to make a moss-covered, three- handled family credenza?

A: No. Probably one of the biggest was to come to Back to the Bible. I always wanted God to call me someplace that had palm trees and sand, and Nebraska has no palm trees. When the opportunity arose, our son had died of a drug overdose, and it was a month later I was to start my job. I remember talking to my wife Shar about leaving completely our support system. We know no one in Nebraska. Is that okay with you, you know, can you do that? And at the same time, where it really kind of rocked my faith, is the guy who had mentored me as a new believer, one of the men's pastors, he said, no, you know, when a son dies, your marriage is going to break up. The odds are like 90% over a death of a kid. It rips the family apart. So all of that was like, wow, you know, do I step out in faith, or am I stepping out in foolishness? And, so you know, it's not like building a boat and all of that, but for me, in my little world, it was really stepping out in faith.

N: Thank you for sharing that. I had not heard that story before and I'm sure our listeners haven't either. But that's the point. God's not going to ask us to build an ark. He's already done that. But He will ask you and I, as His followers, to do something that will cause you to second guess, and to really ask yourself, do I trust God? Will I choose faith over fear? Noah was asked, and he did it in an unbelievable fashion. He asked you to do it in a way that you never thought that God would ask you to do it, and yet you did it, just like Noah. And I'm sure He's asking our listeners today, will you follow me wherever I call?

So here's Noah, tasked with building an ark. God doesn't leave Noah hanging. He immediately gives him the instructions in verses 14 – 16. The size of this ark Noah was to build was 450 feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. Ok, I don't know about you, but I'm not a builder. It took me 3 months and a lot of tools to make a chicken coop for our backyard. But to be tasked with creating a first of its kind structure, that was longer than a football field, and taller than my house...by a lot. I can't even imagine. And Noah had no power tools. He didn't have Ikea instructions that make it so easy anybody can do it. So God says, build this ginormous ark...whatever that is. But then in verse 17, God gives Noah the plan for how He'll deal with His fallen Creation.

¹⁷For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

Okay, I'm going to stop here. God says that He will destroy the Earth and all that inhabit it, by flooding the Earth with water. Now there's a lot of debate out there if there had been rain or not before the flood.

Frankly, it's not a salvific issue, so I don't think people need to be dogmatic about it. I'm under the influence, though, that this was the first rainfall. Why? Consider that at the very least, there was no rain in the Garden of Eden before The Fall.

Genesis 2:5-6 and verse 10 says, “When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground... A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.”

So there was water and mist, but no mention of rain. The first mention of rain in the Bible is in regards to the flood. But think at the end of the story, we know that God sends a rainbow as a sign of The Promise. This was apparently the first of its kind.

Last, Hebrews 11:7, says, “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.” In other words, this act of obedience to events unseen, tells us his act of faith was immense and foolish to the world. Why? No one had heard of an ark. And one had seen or heard of a flood or rain.

So I think there's a cumulative case for this position. So he's going to destroy the Earth by a flood of waters. Noah surely would have understood the danger water can create. Drowning would have been experienced by some people. I have no doubt Noah felt great sadness for the people and world he knew. And then God says, “But.” Verse 18.

¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.” (Vs. 18-21)

God says, Noah, you and your family are the exception. You know Me. You trust Me. You have faith in Me. So I will make a covenant with you. This is the first time the word covenant is in the Bible. A covenant was a promise. Sometimes these covenants were mutual, meaning if they did something, God would do something. Other times, covenants were unconditional. It was all up to God to fulfill. That's what's happening here. God says, I will save you and your family because of your faith. You will build this ark and escape the flood. But you will also bring two of every living animal into the ark, along with enough food.

Man, that's a lot to take in. In just a paragraph, Noah is identified as righteous, and he will build a huge structure with the tools available, to escape a flood, with his family and a zoo. And if you ever feel overwhelmed by the job your boss gives you, think of Noah.

What's Noah's response? Will he choose faith or fear? Listen to verse 22:

²²Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Noah does it. He chooses faith over fear. He was tasked with obeying God at the risk of looking and sounding like an idiot:

Hey Noah! What are you building?

An ark.

An ark, what's an ark? It looks like a waste of time to me! Oh yeah, Noah, what's that for?

A flood is coming. Oh yeah, this water that's in the rivers is going to magically fall from Heaven.

Noah, you're a loser. Get a life.

But no matter the task, no matter the opposition, Noah did all that God commanded him.

N: Arnie, so far in this series, we've looked at some amazing acts of faith. I mean, God used a prostitute to change history. He used a man in chains to advance the Gospel. He used an Egyptian slave to save many, even the lies of a very dysfunctional family. But now we're faced with Noah who was asked to do something unimaginable, in the face of great uncertainty and ridicule. So what have you learned so far about Noah?

A: When faith is involved, oftentimes it defies logic. And I think that's the story that is repeated throughout the story of Noah, is there's no logic behind his stepping out in faith, other than just stepping out in faith. I mean, it's a crazy kind of faith.

N: Right. It is. God asked Noah to build an ark, and he had no concept of what an ark was. Why? For a flood from rain, and he had no concept of rain. It's an amazing act of faith, exactly like you said. Now what do you make of verse 22, where it says that Noah did all that God commanded? I mean, it sounds like Noah is this super believer, but do you think that that's correct?

A: No, I think what it speaks to is, over time, Noah stuck with the job. The Lord gave him a job. He stuck with it. He's not perfect. He has faults and God gave him a lot of grace. But by and large, he was there. He built the ark. I mean, and he and his family did what they were told to do, which is awesome.

N: Yeah, I think you nailed it there. It's a consistent life. And I have no doubt, though Noah is regarded with high regard here, he was a sinner. He still sinned. Yes, he lived a life of integrity before people. But I have no doubt that he probably swore a little bit under his breath, or probably said a few choice words to his neighbors on occasion. I mean, he's human. But again, consistently he lived a life of integrity and of faith to God. So how does Noah's obedience help move you to a greater level of choosing faith over fear?

A: It is a tremendous lesson. You know, I think about a lot of what's not said in the Scripture with the story of Noah. I can't imagine all those years of people walking by, mocking him. They probably would come by and have a few cocktails at night, and make fun of him and, you know, it'd be the neighborhood crazy man and his family, and years. And we're not talking weeks, we're talking years, and it's amazing how his faith, you know, really defied all logic at all. And you don't hear much of him complaining at all, do you?

N: No. Nope. You don't. Yeah. His faith was remarkable, and I think part of it was, he kept his eyes on God, and not on the trouble around him. I think there's much that you and I could learn from Noah.