

"To Adorn a Perfect End"

The story of Noah and his ark is well known even to non-Christians. The name Noah has been common in America, but in recent years the name has also gained its popularity in Japan. You may even know of one. The parents must have named the child from Noah in the bible. Usually, when a parent names their child, the meaning of the name carries the prayers and hope they wish upon their child. I have yet to meet anyone with the names of Judah or Pilate: Judah who had sold Jesus, and Pontius Pilate who had crucified him. When we think of these things, the reason why there are those named Noah is because there was something of value in Noah from the bible. In scripture it is written,

"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." (Genesis 6:9-10) That is why God entrusted Noah and his family to make the ark. It is written in Hebrews 11:7 that, **"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith."** Today we will focus our attention on this man, Noah.

It says here in Hebrews 11:7 that Noah was **"warned about things not yet seen"**. This means that Noah received a message from God before it even occurred.

This world we live in is full of things we can see. There are things we can see and touch and things we can see but cannot touch. Our heart is controlled by the many things that we see. But Noah received a message of something he had not seen. It was that there would be a flood.

But when Noah received this message from God, it was not raining. On the contrary, the land he lived on was dry. For a man who had lived all his life seeing the same landscape, it was unthinkable for rain to fall. Still more, to be told that there would be enough water for a large boat to float would have no sense of reality at all. Yet, Noah listened to the worlds of God. He cut down trees and began to build the ark.

We are "believers". As the word itself implies, we believe and revere God. **A believer** does not judge by only what they see. A believer walks as though they have seen the unseen. Even if what they see is the worst of circumstances, they see through faith that the light is shining down through the gates of heaven.

A "bilingual" person speaks not one, but two languages. Through this they also learn two different cultures. This is a great blessing. many of you here have received this great blessing from God.

In the same way, we live seeing not one but two worlds; a world through faith. This is like living through two worlds with one life. by understanding its words, and seeing both worlds, our lives are made deeper.

According to today's bible passage, Noah believed him even though there was then no sign of a flood, he built the ark and **saved his family**. He grasped that the consequence of the flood would be the destruction of human kind from the face of the earth. But the bible does not state that Noah built the ark to "save the world" but that he built it to "save his family". To save his family meant the saving of the world. A single household is small, but to save a family is to save the world.

And thus, Noah and his family began to build the ark even with no sign of rain. At first, Noah must have told the other people this message from God, encouraging them to join. But the only ones who did take part in the construction of the ark was **Noah and his family of eight**. Noah's family supported him through their faith. They had succeeded his faith. They shared the same vision.

Today, the world surrounding us is restless. It's business has come between us and our families, making it difficult to even consider each other. We are mutually scattered, making it feel as though we are each seeing something completely different. In such situation, there are many things to be done to bring a family back together as one. But the most important thing out of them all is to see through the same faith as the bible tells us.

Children, for a short while, are under the protection and leadership of their parents. But there will be a day in which they will take the path they chose. They will be free to go where they wish, and do what they wish to do. When this day comes, a parent will no longer be able to do anything. I believe we were once this way as well. When this time comes, the strength and power to steer through the stormy seas of life will be their faith. Their faith that allows them to see what cannot be seen.

Imagine; Noah building his ark day after day yet there is no sign of rain. Years go by yet he still continues to build. There may have been times when family meetings were held to discuss doubts and meaning. And their actions would have sprouted rumors and gossip in the city, becoming target of ridicule. Yet Noah and his family did not stop. There will be a time when our children face the same situation. Yes, a time when the

reality of harsh circumstances seems unbearable. However, we are able to see that reality (yes, we do not run from reality) and navigate our way through with faith.

The bible describes the people of Noah's time that **"the extent of human wickedness, and that the trend and direction of men's lives were only towards evil,"** (Genesis 6:5) and that **"all mankind was vicious and depraved."** (Genesis 6:12)

In such a time Noah **believed** and obeyed the words of God. Through this we are able to see the way Noah lived out his life. As we have spoken of before, faith and fear of God is not of fear as in terror, but fear as in awe. Noah lived aware, believing in the invisible but indisputable presence of God in the world. And this faith was what set Noah apart from the other people of his time.

Imagining such life of Noah, I find myself attracted to his way of life. Why? Because he lived with conviction of his faith.

Why did I feel this way? It is because I have a Japanese mentality. It is because Japanese people tend to worry more about how others see them. Looking back on myself, I see this.

How many people do you know live with unwavering conviction in what they believe? Maybe it is that we do not even have the time to think of such things. How many people have what they can say, "This is where I stand," "This is where I belong" to? Maybe we are determining where we stand by the wavering trends of this world, or by comparing ourselves to the people around us. Unlike the way so many people place themselves by thinking, "because many people believe this" or "because this is the popular opinion", we are strongly drawn to the way of Noah in which he firmly stands in his faith, living within it with his family.

We are currently in the presidential elections process. The running candidates are desperate for every supporter they can get. Yes, it is a battle of numbers. It certainly is a reassuring thing to have people support your principles. But it is not about numbers if you truly stand in conviction of what you believe. No matter if it is 10, 5, or even just 1 person who stands with you in understanding, it is a great blessing to us. When Jesus stood in his conviction, and bore the cross for our sins, no one understood him.

Here, the details of the days Noah and his family spent building the ark is not written. There must have been some challenges in working as one towards a single vision, but there must have also been a greater joy to it. Even with opposition and hardship, they

had tranquility from their heavenly father, worth, and union. Noah and his family lived these days deeply relishing them.

The years past and as God had warned them, the flood came. The ark they had made through years of hard work floated above the raging floodwaters. They spent time within the ark. And eventually the rain stopped and dry land appeared before them. Yes, the day for them to leave the ark had come. Noah built an altar and sacrificed the animals and birds brought for that purpose and thanked God.

The rain had fallen for 40 days and 40 nights. They spent a few more months in the ark after the rain had stopped. What would you have done when the door was opened? Noah had made a thanks offering. The offerings were burnt on the altar. This offering signifies Noah's complete devotion to God.

Now, some of you may be thinking, "Wait, the title of this message series is 'Life's Crisis Management' and so shouldn't we be learning from the mistakes of the people written about in the bible?"

Yes, do not worry, I have not forgotten. Only, when we take a look at the life of Noah, we see so many things of value. And so, I wished to speak of these things first. After Noah made the ark, survived the flood, and thanked God, what does the bible document about his life in the book of Genesis?

"Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard, and he made wine. One day as he was drunk and lay naked in his tent, Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and went outside and told his two brothers." (Genesis 9:20-22)

Noah accomplished the mission given by God and settled in the land. He became a farmer. Yes, he sowed seeds and reaped its harvest. The fruit produced by the land was God's blessing, and among them were the grapes. The grapes harvested were truly a great blessing given to Noah by God. To that blessing Noah and his family applied some process. They fermented the grapes and made wine from them. The blessing of grapes became a pleasing beverage with great flavor to Noah. The history of wine is old. And since, wine is mentioned many times in the bible. The first miracle performed by Jesus was the changing of water into wine at a wedding; and with wine, Jesus revealed to his disciples that he would be bleeding on the cross during the last supper.

The bible does not prohibit the drinking of wine, and there is nothing wrong with wine itself. But Noah failed to use God's blessing in a righteous way. Yes, Noah became drunk from the wine and lay naked, passed out, disgracefully exposed.

When reading the bible we see that after moving and settling in a land and gaining some stability in their lives, many become careless and commit a great blunder. David, who was loved by God, made a great error in his life after he gained great success and reputation. (2 Samuel 11) For most of his life, David had lived a pleasing life in the eyes of the Lord. But that day came suddenly. He had to accept the consequences to his actions, an action that could not be made up for with just tears. As Apostle Paul has said **"So be careful. If you are thinking, "Oh, I would never behave like that"—let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin"** (1 Corinthians 10:12) the times when we think we are doing fine; without a worry in the world, we are most likely to be tripped.

As we spoke of earlier, Noah found favor in God's eyes. I do not argue this. His obedience led his life. Yet in his later years of life, Noah had gotten himself into the habit of relying on wine for comfort rather than from God.

To such shameful behavior of Noah, his sons took different approaches to this situation. Ham went out and told his brothers. Perhaps Ham most some of his respect towards his father who he followed in faith. Opposed to Ham, the two other sons, Shem and Japheth took their robe and help it over their shoulders walking backwards into the tent, and let it fall over their father's body. They did not try to see him exposed. I will talk more about this another time but as a result, Ham and his descendants were effected by this as written in the bible.

In spite of Noah's life being pleasing to God prior, Noah's blunder in his last years had a serious influence on his children and descendants. It is said that Moses is the writer of Genesis, and he had probably heard this as oral tradition. Writing the life of Noah faithful to God, as Moses came to this event, he may have wondered if he should write it down or not (to be hidden and forgotten, or remembered). Yet Moses, led by Holy Spirit, wrote this down as history to be remembered. When we think of this, we can see that whether it was Moses, Abraham, Jacob, David, Elijah, Peter, or Paul, their mistakes are written along with their obedience. And what this signifies; the purpose for this is without doubt for those who will have come after; for you and me.

Paul often used sports in parables to speak the truth. There were already at that time sports like the Olympia, and Paul may have enjoyed watching, or even participating in such games. He may have even found truth leading to his faith through them. He writes, **"In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win. To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears. So I run straight to the**

goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I'm not just shadow-boxing or playing around. Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

We are taught a lesson from his life. It is written here to run your race to win, so life's race seems to be a competition with rank. But in reality, the path we walk is not a race but one that must be faced with temperance so that we may be awarded, and the goal is to complete it. To reach this goal, Paul says himself that he pushes his body to continue running. The reason being because it could result in his own disqualification otherwise. Dear brothers and sisters, where did Paul obtain such way of thinking. It was the mistakes, much like the ones we looked at today as written in the bible from which he obtained such caution. He must have thought, the mistakes that they have made could just as easily happen to me today.

Noah had at first ran to be the example to his family with proper temperance. But as the goal grew closer, he blundered. Not everyone will make the same mistake as Noah. But we may spoil the relationship we have created with God with something unexpected much like the wine. No one can declare that they will never make a mistake like Noah.

Life is unpredictable even to the last moment. We do not compete for rank. But there is no one who does not wish to complete the full race of life with God. The word cowardance does not have a positive connotation. But we must be cautious of what could happen unexpectedly. In Genesis it is written that Noah believed and feared God. Let us adorn a perfect end in Christ. How long we have left in our lives is only known by God himself. We wish to live this life fearing the Lord, to be loved by him and people through our days, and to break the finish line ribbon the Lord welcomes us with. Let's pray.

Translated by Shirah Vogt