Noah, the "Legalist"
Dub McClish

When theological liberals want to cast the strongest possible aspersion on those who still believe God said what He means and means what He says in the Bible, they call him a "legalist." True Bible believers accept this term as a compliment. Its primary meaning is one who believes in "strict adherence to the law." The hurler of *legalist* thereby implies his own disregard for the Bible (liberals have always believed they could read between the Bible's lines for the "true meaning," regardless of the words, comparable to the attitude of political liberals toward our Constitution).

In the view of theological liberals, every Bible character who carefully followed God's commands was a "legalist." That being so, it follows that every Bible character who disobeyed God (disregarded His Word) was a liberal. Fact, the essence of liberalism in religion is "freedom from tradition and authority in matters of belief."

Let us consider Noah, the famous builder of the ark that saved a remnant of mankind from the great flood. Genesis 6:5 tells us that men had become so utterly and universally wicked that God could no longer tolerate their existence. However, Noah was the exception, and God looked upon him with grace/favor (v. 8). Moses stated the basis of God's grace toward Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God" (v. 9). God was obviously pleased with Noah **before** he built the ark. Just as obviously, we learn here that God's grace toward Noah was conditional, based upon his obedience. If grace were unconditional, then God would have spared all of that wicked generation of liberal rebels.

God specified the ark's materials (gopher wood and pitch), dimensions (300 x 50 x 30 cubits), and layout (1 window, 1 door, 3 floors, various rooms) (vv. 14–16). Moses described Noah's response to these specifications: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (v. 22). God was obviously pleased with Noah **after** he built the ark. Let us suppose Noah decided to build the ark 51 cubits wide? Had he been a liberal, he would have done so without a second thought, but would he have continued to enjoy God's favor?

Noah built the ark "by faith" (Heb. 11:7), which God's Word produces (Rom. 10:17). He did not "read between the lines"; he read—and obeyed—only what the "lines" said.

What have we learned? (1) God was definitely pleased with Noah's obedience. (2) By definition, Noah was thereby definitely a "legalist," not a "liberal." (3) God definitely approves of "legalism" and rejects "liberalism" that despises His Word.