

98-06-07b

We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis chapter six. We are noting and have noted in some detail the important factors that surround this rather straightforward story, a very well-known story of Noah and the flood. We think, well, we just take it for granted.

We've heard about it so often. You go to the toy store and they've got a little stuffed ark with little stuffed animals, a little stuffed Noah, a little stuffed family. You've got puzzles and storybooks that tell us all about Noah and the ark, and it's one of the first Bible stories that children learn.

And we hear it and take it for granted so much that we don't stop and think how extraordinary it is that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And we very seldom stop and meditate on why. And if you ever find yourself in a discussion where someone is trying to push on you the idea of sovereign election and that God sovereignly reaches down into the totally depraved, useless, hopeless mass of humanity and arbitrarily selects certain ones, or for reasons known only to himself, picks certain ones to save, just ask, can you explain how that's illustrated in the story of Noah? Because Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Noah was preserved. Covenant was confirmed with Noah. But it doesn't say anything about God looking down and seeing that the entire earth was corrupt and had corrupted its way and was ruined.

But God picked Noah and sort of uncorrupted him and put grace in his heart to be different from his ruined generation, which previously he had been just like. From the beginning, Noah is righteous. Noah is blameless.

And Noah walks with God. And that is the basis of God's choice of Noah for deliverance. God says, I know you, Noah.

I've got a covenant with you. We've walked together these many years. Long before the flood, long before the pronouncement of judgment, God knew Noah because Noah was righteous.

Noah knew what God said. Noah knows the difference between a clean and an unclean animal, doesn't he? I wonder how he knew that. Does God hear in the instructions on the ark say, by the way, there's two different kinds of animals.

Let me tell you which ones are clean and have seven pairs of those come in. And here's the ones that are unclean. Just bring two pairs.

God just says, Noah, you've got seven pairs of clean animals, pairs of unclean animals come into the ark. Noah already, how does he know that? Because Noah knows God,

knows the things of God, has been walking with God, understands how to be righteous, understands how to be blameless, and has been living that way for years and years and years. And that is the basis of the preservation in the ark.

There would not have been an ark if there had not been a Noah. Everything that Noah had came from God. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Grace is free. Grace is available to everyone. But you have to want it.

You can't just be walking along thinking about something else and have grace come down and land on your head. It comes to those who are seeking. It comes to those who want it, who recognize it, who appreciate it, and who take advantage of it.

So we've seen that Noah is righteous. We've talked about what righteousness is and where it comes from. Righteousness comes from God.

We don't create it. We don't generate it. We don't infuse ourselves with it.

We don't do something to earn it or deserve it. We are declared righteous by God when we trust Him. We've talked about trust.

Trust isn't sort of an abstract, Oh, yes, I trust God. I believe He's there. I know He's benevolent, etc., etc.

Trust is specific. Trust is concrete. You trust in something.

And you make a habit out of trust. Most of us fly down the highway at high speeds in a contraption made of metal and plastic. And we trust it.

We expect that it's not going to fly apart. Why? Well, we have experience. We've driven it before.

We've seen other people drive it. It seemed to work. We have confidence that they wouldn't be selling it and charging all that money for it if it wasn't going to hold together.

We understand the properties of physics, and we know that rubber tires are going to hold together, generally. Engines are going to run, generally. We have some vague idea of what an internal combustion engine does, and so forth.

We know the steering wheel is connected to the front tires. We know it's got brakes. We know that it's got a speedometer, and we put confidence in these things.

We trust them, and we make a habit out of that. Well, that's the sort of habit we need in our real life. The box that surrounds all of the other boxes is that in everything we do, we recognize God's place and God's purpose, and that the principles and the promises of God pertain and apply in every area of life.

And that's our first point of reference. When we contemplate a new course of action, when we contemplate doing something here in a few minutes, or here in a few hours, or here in the next few days, and say, well, I'm fixing to do this, do we stop and think, where is this in the context of God's plan? Does God have an attitude about this, pro or con? Does God have an interest in why I am doing this, and what purpose I am attempting to achieve? Have I thought about this at all in terms of my relationship with God? People tend to think, well, relationship with God is praying and quoting verses and being holy and that sort of thing, and it's not. Relationship with God, righteousness that comes from God, is expressed in the details of life.

Remember what Macintosh said in that thing we read last hour? It is in the details of everyday life that your walk with God takes place. But we've got to wake up and remember that. We tend to put spiritual life in one little box on the shelf, put the lid on it, and then we go do these other things.

And then occasionally we go back and open that box up and we say, you know, like Jack Horner that sticks his thumb in the pie there and pulls out a plum and says, my, what a good boy am I. We take the lid off the righteousness box, off the spiritual box, once in a while, and we say, well, you know, got that squared away, let's stick that on the shelf and now get on with real life. So this is what walk with God pertains to. I don't want to leave this discussion of Noah's three great attributes without being sure we understand blameless, because this is essential to the other two.

You can't maintain righteousness and you can't walk with God if you don't understand how to be blameless. We looked last week at the idea of the connection between purification and relationship with God. If you're going to walk in the light, you can't have darkness stuck to you.

If you're going to spend time with a holy God, you can't be impure and unclean yourself. And you think, well, we all sin. How could we possibly have fellowship with God? We have to know how to be cleansed.

Jesus gave that great demonstration of this daily cleansing principle in the upper room. When he strips to the waist, wraps the towel around him, kneels with a bowl of water and begins to wash the disciples' feet. And it's so unfortunate that that's misunderstood as only an example of humility and service to others.

And some people take it literally. And if you can imagine going to church on Sunday and having somebody come along. You peel off your shoes and socks and they're actually going to get this bowl of water and wash your feet.

The distraction factor in that, you know. Have you ever seen... Well, I'm not sure I want to bring that up. Some people... There's been commercials on TV recently about toenail problems because of fungus infection.

People that are embarrassed to have their feet uncovered because... I mean, you can imagine people that are self-conscious because of whatever may be the matter with their feet. And to totally miss the point of that illustration. Yes, it is an indication of humility and putting the interests of others ahead of your own dignity or your own place or whatever it may be.

But to limit it to that is to miss the main point. The main point is that as you walk through life, it is inevitable that you're going to pick up road dust on your feet. You don't need the whole bath of salvation again.

Peter says, Lord, you're not going to wash my feet. The Lord says, If I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me. You have no fellowship with me.

You're not going to be able to walk with me. Peter says, Oh, well, in that case, wash me all over. Well, again, you have a distraction factor there.

What if people went down that road in church? And they actually do in the Mormon church. When you get married, they take you down to the basement and take all your clothes off and wash you down and rub you with oil all over. And it's a weird thing.

But the whole bath is a picture of salvation. Jesus says, No, somebody that's had a bath doesn't need another bath. What you need is your feet washed.

And that's cleansing on a daily basis. That's purification. That is how to be blameless, to get the road dust off our feet.

So Jesus washes the disciples' feet. And then what does he say? As I have done for you, so you should do for one another. What does that mean? We don't save each other, do we? We don't give each other baths in the spiritual sense.

We do wash each other's feet in the spiritual sense. And that means if somebody wrongs you, it doesn't matter how grievous it is or how indignant you feel, if someone wrongs you, it is your place to do what Jesus did. Get down on one knee with the towel and the bowl and cleanse their feet.

You wash that away. That's what Jesus does for us, no matter how grievous or repetitious our sins are. Every time we go to God and claim His grace, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us, not just from the sins that we confess, but from all unrighteousness.

The act of going to God and acknowledging our place and our failure is what God is looking for. And He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Well, somebody may or may not ever admit to you that they have sinned against you, that they've injured you, that they've slighted you, that they've wounded you, that they've done you wrong.

It doesn't matter. We take out the bowl and wash their feet because it is an inherent part of our own cleansing before God that we cleanse others, at least in our own mind. And Jesus said, if you don't forgive others, you are not forgiven.

And all of this talk about rebound and confession and so forth, people don't tend to bring out some of the other very important truths. People have laid so much stress on confession and what is confession and do you have to feel sorry and so forth. There are many other important truths about cleansing from God for daily sin.

And one of the most important ones is you're wasting your time. You can confess until you're blue in the face and out of breath. And if you have not forgiven others in your mind, forget it.

If you're bearing a grudge, if you are holding an outstanding I owe you from somebody and saying, you know, they owe me. They goofed me up. They messed me over.

They've wronged me. And I'm not forgetting. I remember.

I know. There's a day coming. One of these days, you know, tit for tat, we'll balance this scale.

If you can't love your enemies, if you can't do good to those who hate you, if you can't pray for those that spitefully use you, if you cannot wash the stinky feet of someone that has done you wrong, God is not going to wash your stinky feet either. And that's the teaching of the Word of God. This is under our heading of blameless.

How are you going to be blameless? 2 Chronicles 6.29 At the occasion of Solomon dedicating the temple. Whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone or by all your people Israel, this is Solomon's prayer to God, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief and spreads out his hands to this temple, then hear, O God, from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and give to everyone according to all his ways whose heart you know. For you alone know the hearts of the sons of men, that they may fear you to walk in your ways as long as they live in the land which you gave to our fathers.

People come to God. They come to the place of worship. They come to the place of the presence of God in this case in the Old Testament.

We don't have to go anywhere for this, do we? Because God dwells within us. Hopefully. The Spirit of God is certainly there.

Hear from your dwelling place and forgive so that they may fear you to walk in your ways. We're purified so that we can walk. Our feet are cleansed so that we can walk in the light.

2 Chronicles 7.14 God says, If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, I will heal their land. It's a condition. You've got to know the condition of the promise.

Some people think, Hey, I'm saved. All sin was paid for at the cross, so what's the point of bringing sin up before God? It's all been handled. It's all a past issue.

Completely miss the point of Jesus in the upper room. Completely miss the point of humbling, praying, seeking God's face, turning from one's wicked ways. The practical rehabilitation of the soul that should take place as a result of the positional rehabilitation we have in Christ.

Jeremiah 36.3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them. This is the chastening effect of judgment. The turning effect.

Why does God discipline? Why do you spank your child when they malfunction? It's supposed to communicate something. It's supposed to have a preventative effect. People say capital punishment and so forth doesn't have a preventative effect in society because it's so poorly applied.

Go to Turkey and see how many thieves there are. Nobody ever steals more than twice over there because on the first offense they cut off your hand. On the second offense they cut off your other hand.

Then you don't steal anymore. It has a very good preventative effect. It may be that the house of Judah, Jeremiah 36.3 will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them that everyone may turn from his evil way that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

There is a turning involved. There is a change of mind involved in forgiveness. Daniel 9.8 Oh Lord, this is Daniel.

This is a corporate confession of sin. Daniel looks at his nation and confesses on behalf of the nation to God. Oh Lord, to us belongs shame and face.

Remember Daniel is one of the three righteous men that God names and he says, even if... who does he say? Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land they would save only themselves, nobody else, by their righteousness. Daniel is mentioned and here is Daniel, the righteous man. Why is he in that category with Noah and with Job? Righteousness, blamelessness, walking with God.

Daniel understands it and here is an example of him exercising it. Oh Lord, to us belongs shame and face. Daniel 9.8 To our kings, our princes and our fathers.

Have you thought about confessing the sins of our political leadership to God and expressing our shame and our sorrow that this type of sin prevails in our government and in our culture? It's a legitimate thing to do. Oh Lord, to us belongs shame and face. To our kings, our princes and our fathers because we have sinned against you.

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness. Even though we have rebelled against him, we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed your law and has departed so as not to obey your voice therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God have been poured out on us because we have sinned against him.

You can go back and read about that curse in Deuteronomy 28. Now therefore, this is Daniel 9.17 Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of your servant and his supplications and for the Lord's sake cause your face to shine on your sanctuary which is desolate. Oh my God, incline your ear and hear.

Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by your name for we do not present our supplications before you because of our righteous deeds but because of your great mercies. Oh Lord, hear. Oh Lord, forgive.

Oh Lord, listen and act. Do not delay. For your own sake, my God, for your city and your people who are called by your name.

The focus there is appeal to God based on who and what he is, his purposes, his glory that is at stake. It's a good example for how to pray for our nation. Luke chapter 17 verse 3 Take heed to yourselves.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day he returns to you saying, I repent, you shall forgive him.

Of course, the big question there is well, what if he doesn't repent? Then do I not have to forgive him? Well, stop and think. Do you really want to risk your forgiveness before God? You want to say, well, he didn't repent, so that gives me an excuse to hold a grudge and that gives me an excuse to not wash his feet in my mind. This is talking about practical forgiveness.

You can forgive someone in your heart. You're not bearing a grudge. You're not seeking retribution.

You're not sinning in your soul. But in the practical sense, are you going to be able to enjoy a relationship and fellowship with that person? Are you going to sit at meat with them? Are you going to be able to enjoy the practical benefits of relationship if they don't repent? Probably not. But it doesn't change the fact that in your soul and in your heart,

you have to cleanse their feet and in so doing, cleanse yourself so that you don't bear a grudge.

Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. And there's a difference in forgiveness. God can forgive and cleanse sins that are confessed and yet if we don't start walking in the light, we just start piling up a whole fresh set of issues.

The same is true here. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 3. What are we talking about here? Why are we looking at these verses? Because we're thinking about Noah. Noah is righteous.

Noah is blameless. That's what we're looking at. Noah is walking with God.

You can't walk with God and you can't be righteous if you don't understand faith, if you don't understand purification. These are the scriptures that you need to know and that I need to know and that we all need to remember if we're going to be blameless. If you are not familiar with these scriptures, if you hang your hat on 1 John 1, 9 alone, you're missing a lot of what the Word of God has to say about purification.

2 Corinthians 2, verse 3. I write this very thing to you, lest when I come, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy. Believers who don't understand how to purify themselves are a cause for sorrow rather than joy. We're going to see this in our study of the greetings of Paul's epistles, what it is he's thankful for next Friday night.

Having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all, for out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you, and so forth. He is talking about a believer who has sinned and he encouraged them to expunge that individual turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. They shouldn't be glorying in the fact that they're associating with someone who's living in open sin.

And now that this punishment that was inflicted, in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 6, he says, this punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man. The punishment is enough. That has accomplished its purpose.

He's awakened. He's realized the error of his ways. He's changed his behavior.

He's abandoned this form of evil that he was engaged in. So that now, verse 7, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Sometimes we think, well, here's a person that's malfunctioned and they deserve the implications of the doctrine of separation here.

I'm going to not eat bread with them. I'm going to get away. He who does not work does not eat this, that, and the other.

We're going to get away. And then this person has a change of heart. They repent.

They see the error of their ways and they start mending and start on the path to growth again. But we're enjoying the doctrine of separation and the doctrine of get thee hence, and we're not willing to forgive in the practical sense. We're not willing to have any further fellowship.

And in essence, it's bearing a grudge. Well, remember that big sin you committed? I just don't think you're worthy of my fellowship anymore. And when there has been an obvious change of heart, there's been an obvious change of mind and change of behavior, it doesn't matter how grievous it was.

It is time for encouragement. It is time for comfort, lest such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. So Paul says in verse 8, Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to Him.

For to this end I also wrote, this is the purpose I wrote, that I might put you to the test whether you are obedient in all things. Do you know how to obey when it is time to discipline? Do you know how to obey when it is time to forgive? You're getting tested in all things because both sides of that coin pertain. Whom you forgive, I forgive.

And so on. James 5.15 The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Why? Because he has prayed the prayer of faith. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. A lot of people have gone to this verse and James has said, Now see, public confession of sin, this is how you get forgiveness.

You've got to acknowledge it. So then people stand up and here's another distraction. You think unveiling the feet can be a distraction.

Standing up and confessing your sins in public can be a huge distraction. Somebody's going to stand up and say, Well, I've had lust in my heart for Sister So-and-So over here. And those low-cut, high-hem dresses she's wearing really get me going every time I come to church and so forth.

Standing up with this sort of thing in church is going to do nothing, but what do you think he's going to catch from his wife later on? There's going to be a whole complex of sin. What is this talking about in James 5? Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another. What does it say? That you may be forgiven? No.

That you may be healed. And this is healing in the realm of relationships. If the breach is going to be healed, people have to acknowledge there's a difference in forgiving someone in your heart and not bearing a grudge and being healed in terms of ongoing relationship and fellowship with that person.

The Bible makes that distinction. Many times we do not. That sometimes is necessary.

There are even secular programs that acknowledge this. You can go to AA and some of these other programs where you have wronged people because of substance abuse or whatever. And they will tell you the same thing.

It's a truth that yields to observation. You sometimes have to go back to people before you can really have a healthy relationship again and acknowledge I really have done some terrible things to you and with regard to you during the period of this abuse. And I acknowledge that.

It's not necessary for forgiveness from God. It shouldn't even be necessary for forgiveness from another believer. They should have already forgiven that wrong in their hearts.

But to reestablish healthy relationships, to be able to build on a new foundation, many times that's necessary. And that's what James says. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.

Pray for those who have spitefully used you so that you may be healed. And that's you as a relationship. That's you as a pair of people.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. We like to rip that one out of context and say any time we're fervent, our prayer is going to be answered. What is that prayer? That's the prayer for this person that wronged you.

What's the context of the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much? It's praying for one another who has trespassed against you. That's the context. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

He prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. All of that is in that same context.

You've trespassed against another or someone has trespassed against you. How do you cope with that? How do you overcome it? It's through prayer. It's through forgiveness, acknowledgement to one another of where the wrong is and that's where healing, genuine healing begins.

Someone who wanders from the truth and you're able to help them come back because you're not pushing them away constantly. If they're wandering around trying to find the truth, they've wandered away and now they're trying to wander back, don't be the stumbling block. Don't let your attitude and your lack of forgiveness and your lack of understanding of God's plan be an obstacle to that person fulfilling God's will in returning and finding the right way.

If they're looking around at who's got the answers, are they going to look at you and say, well, that cold-hearted so-and-so doesn't have the answers. That can't be the nature of God. God forgives.

God brings the wandering sheep back into the fold. This person doesn't have that attitude so they can't have, they must not know the truth, they can't have the answers and so they go off to some happy, touchy-feely church that doesn't have the answers either but at least has the veneer of the answers. Don't be a stumbling block to someone who has wandered from the truth and is now trying to return.

Watch for signs of the desire to recover and the desire to be healed. Watch for those who are willing to acknowledge what they've done and comfort them. Don't let them be burdened down with too much sorrow.

These are some of the principles that also apply to being blameless. Principles of forgiveness. Principles of acknowledgement and cleansing.

So, now we've got the picture. Noah has an active covenant relationship with God and he has the knowledge and the means of maintaining it. He knows righteousness.

He knows blamelessness. He knows how to walk with God. We now are aware of those things as well and hopefully know how to put it into practice.

So, God comes and God looks and God sees. God sees the wicked generation that has ruined its way and he says, I will ruin them. But God also sees Noah.

You see in chapter 6, verse 12, God looked upon the earth and indeed it was corrupt. You also see that Noah, in verse 8, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God sees.

Remember that prayer that Solomon prayed? He said, God, you see into the hearts. You know what's going on. God saw the hearts of that generation and he pronounced his judgment.

God looks into the heart of Noah and Noah finds grace. So, he says in verse 17, I myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life, everything that is on the earth shall die. But, verse 18, I will confirm my covenant with you and you shall go into the ark, you, your sons, your wives, your sons' wives with you.

Now, why is there an ark for him to go into? Almost everybody in Christendom will acknowledge that you have some sort of a picture, some sort of a commentary on salvation in the Noah and the flood story, right? You have deliverance there and in the perspective that emphasizes election and divine predestination and so forth, we think, well, man is totally depraved, hopeless, helpless, useless. God comes in. God changes his mind.

God provides salvation. Man's contribution is zero. God's contribution is 100.

If you make any noises about man doing anything, saying anything, choosing anything, you're saying man's cooperating in his salvation. Well, here you have the, I love to work this in, you have the archetype of salvation with Noah and the ark. And what do you have? Does God say, Noah, behold, you're a part of this corrupt, ruined generation, but I've chosen you out and I'm going to make you blameless.

I'm going to make you righteous. I'm going to cause you to walk in my ways. No, Noah is already in that category and God sees him.

And in God's eyes, Noah finds grace because Noah has already chosen. Now, there's going to be deliverance from this great ruin that God is going to bring on the earth. So God says, Noah, behold, the end of all flesh has come before me.

I'm going to wipe them off the face of the earth. But if you look to your left, you'll see this gigantic ark that I've prepared for you. And I want you to stand by.

I'm going to pick you up by the hair of your head, like Ezekiel will get picked up many centuries later. I'll pick you up by the hair of the head. I'm going to drop you in this ark that you'll see already prepared to your left here.

You and your family with you. I'm going to drop in some animals and you're going to be preserved. Do you find it at all singular? Do you find it at all striking that God, who created the universe, created everything in it, who has all of this creative power, says, Noah, make an ark.

Noah has to build the means of his own deliverance. I find this astonishing. And I find it a very substantial obstacle to the divine election, total divine effort, zero man's effort, zero man's choice, zero man's involvement picture of deliverance and salvation.

God says, Noah, make an ark. If you don't make the ark, you're not going to be delivered. You have to make it.

You can't dog paddle this long. You and the animals in your family are going to be preserved. But you are going to manufacture with your own two hands the instrument of your deliverance.

Kind of reminds you of Philippians, doesn't it? Let's turn over there to Philippians 1. Because you have here the balance. We get into error through imbalance. We studied this Friday night.

The Colossian heresy was a matter of imbalance. Many things that were not inherently sinful became wrong because they were out of balance. They had too high a priority.

They edged out other things. They were thought to be necessary to fullness in the

Christian life. But if you look in Philippians, you have a beautiful picture in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 of the balance in God's plan.

Philippians 1, verse 6. It's talking about your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. So God is at work. God is at work in them to will and to do his good purpose.

So we have God's work. God's work is internal. God's work is the transformation of the soul and the heart because they are responsive.

Then look over at chapter 2, verse 12. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed... Notice these are obedient believers. They have responded to the gospel.

They've responded to the teaching of the truth. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. This is what Noah's being called upon to do, isn't it? He's got to work out his own salvation.

He's got to get out there and chop down gopher trees or go down to the lumber yard. Maybe they had lumber yards at this time. So it's sort of like the pre-flood Home Depot.

You go down there. I'd like a pallet of gopher wood. I need some 2x6s and some 2x8s.

I need some round wooden pegs and so forth. I need a mallet. I need a measuring tape.

I'd like that 50-cubit measuring tape. Got to make the ark certain dimensions. But then look at verse 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Noah respects the word of the Lord. Noah habitually lives this way.

He walks with God. So work out your own salvation. Why? For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do, for His good pleasure.

There's a balance. God works in us. We work around us.

God works in us, and we work out our deliverance. God works salvation within, and we work out. He works in, and we work out.

There's a balance there. There is action involved in our daily deliverance, our daily salvation, the salvation that Jesus Christ died to give us. You look at the very first chapter of Philippians, where Christ died to deliver us from this present evil age.

I believe it's Philippians. Or maybe it's Galatians. There's a daily deliverance, deliverance out of this present evil age.

And that's a part of our salvation. That's the salvation that we work out. How do we get delivered out of the present evil age? How did Noah get delivered out of his present evil age? Well, he practiced faith for righteousness.

He practiced purification for blamelessness, and he walked with God. That's what we need to do. That is every box on our shelf.

We practice righteousness, purification, and walking with God in our relationships with people, in our work ethics, in our work efforts, in our home life, in our hobby life, in our entertainment and recreation activities. These things ought to be conditioned by the knowledge that we are bought with a price, and we should glorify God in what we do. And whatever we do, do it hardly as unto the Lord.

We've got to stop and think about this. It ought to make a difference. There's no point in being a Christian.

If you think it's a ticket out of the lake of fire, then that's all it's ever going to be for you. If you recognize that it is the means to glory, it's the means to relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, it is the means of partaking of the eternal future now, preparing for the eternal future now, having an extraordinary life that has an invisible, eternal component, minute by minute. If you care about that, if it makes a difference to you, these passages and these concepts will make a difference to you this afternoon and tomorrow and the next day.

That's what we want to watch for. So, make yourself an ark, God says. God works in us and we work as a result.

Turn with me to Haggai. We don't get to go to Haggai very often. This is a great short book.

It's actually just a couple of chapters. If you're not sure where it is, you've got to go through your list of minor prophets. It's Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

If you can find Matthew and work backward a few books, you'll find Haggai. This is a short book about building the temple. Remember when everybody came back? You've got Ezra, Nehemiah, rebuild the temple and so forth.

Well, here's Haggai. The second year of King Darius, six months on the first day of the month, where the Lord came by Haggai, Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Sheltiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, the high priest, saying, Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying, This people says the time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Look, it's early.

We just got back here. Jerusalem is in a shambles. We've been in captivity.

We've got all of this work to be done. We've got to rebuild our civilization from the ground up. It's not time to build the temple yet.

Let's get these other things knocked out here first. Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, verse 4, Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses and this temple to lie in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, this is the third time that's been repeated. You kind of get the idea the Lord is speaking here.

He wants people to know that it's coming straight from him. Consider your ways. Consider your walk, inhabitants of Jerusalem.

You have sown much and bring in little. You eat, but do not have enough. You drink, but you're not filled with drink.

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages, earns wages to put it in a bag with holes. Do you feel sometimes like your life is an exercise in frustration? It doesn't seem like anything really prospers.

Nothing bears fruit. It all seems to be two steps forward, three steps back. That's how they felt in Jerusalem.

And why was it? Because God did not have his proper place in their thinking. They weren't walking in the light. They weren't walking with God.

They weren't concentrating on righteousness and blamelessness. Thus says the Lord of hosts in verse 7. How many times has he said this now? Is this God talking? I think so. Consider your ways, God says.

Verse 8, Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple. Kind of reminds you of Noah. That I may take pleasure in it and be glorified, says the Lord.

You looked for much, but indeed it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. There's a good modern turn of phrase for you.

You bring it home and God blows it away. Why, says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

You've put your personal interests ahead of the things of God. The house is the place of worship. The house is the place of the presence of God.

If you're not prioritizing the place and the presence of God in your life, you're going to bring stuff home and God's going to blow it away. Why? Because you belong to him and he's going to get your attention. And he's going to say, Consider your ways.

Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew and the earth withholds its fruit. For I have called a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and

the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands. Remember how the blight hit the whole earth, including the animals, the livestock and so on, at the flood? Why? God didn't have his proper place.

Look at verse 12. Zerubbabel the son of Shelteel, Joshua the son of Jehoshadak the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the presence of the Lord.

Then Haggai the Lord's messenger spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. They heeded the word of the Lord. And what happened? God says, I am with you now.

Now things are different. You've turned around. You've changed your mind.

This is the genuine meaning of repentance. You hear the word of the Lord and you do something about it. So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shelteel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehoshadak the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people.

And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts their God on the 24th day of the sixth month, the second year of King Darius. Notice the order there. God speaks.

People respond. God says, I am with you. God stirs up the spirit.

Then they work. If you put the work somewhere earlier in that chain, it's never going to take place. The work is the last thing.

The work is the result of hearing the word of God, acknowledging the word of God, obeying the word of God, giving God his proper place in the life. God will stir up the spirit that is in the leadership and in the worship life and in the individual people, and then they work. How do we work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Do we get out there flying elbows and knees and find a ministry? No.

Look at the example in Haggai. And you can read on through all of chapter 2. When they started the work, it wasn't very impressive. A lot of them could remember the old temple of Solomon.

And they looked at the new temple they were building and it just brought tears to their eyes. Oh boy, this doesn't hold a candle. This doesn't even fill the shadow of the old temple.

Do you feel sometimes that when you start to get on the road and you're trying to learn and grow and seek the will of God, you're trying to do these things that we've talked about this morning, that the results aren't very impressive? Well, that's exactly what

happened in Haggai's day. Look at verse 3 of chapter 2. Who is left among you who saw the temple in its former glory? How do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes like nothing? You tend to get discouraged. You say, boy, I'm trying to do all these things, trying to walk with God, trying to do the work, and it's just like nothing compared to what I've seen before, what I've seen elsewhere, what I see in the Bible perhaps.

Look at verse 4. This is your encouragement. Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord, and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work, for I am with you. This is work based on faith.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. You're working on the temple here. It doesn't look like much.

Be strong. I'm with you, God says. Look at verse 5. According to the word that I covenanted with you, when you came out of Egypt, so my spirit remains among you.

Do not fear. Thus says the Lord of Hosts. Once more, I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the desire of all nations, and I will fill this temple, not the beautiful one that Solomon built, this shabby one that you don't think much of. The work that you're doing looks like nothing. I will fill this temple with glory, says the Lord of Hosts.

Which temple is it, by the way, that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to visit? The tabernacle of Moses? No. The tabernacle that David brought to Jerusalem? No. The house of God that Solomon built? No.

It's this shabby temple. This one that people looked at and were so sad. They were obedient to the word of the Lord, but they said, boy, the results of our efforts are like nothing.

God says, this is the temple I'm going to fill with glory. This is the temple to which the desire of all nations will come. This is the temple that Jesus Christ is going to sit and teach in.

So take heart. Do not fear. Be strong.

I'm with you, God says. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter temple, verse 9, shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of Hosts.

And in this place, I will give peace. Remember in Corinthians, Jesus Christ, He is our

peace. He is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus Christ is going to come and minister and ultimately offer Himself to Israel and to the nations in this temple that seems so humble in their eyes. Don't lose heart. If you take hold of these things that we've seen, in Genesis chapter 6, you see righteousness by faith, you see blamelessness by grace, you see walking with God through obedience and through latching on to these things, and you look at the result and you say, boy, this is a shabby dwelling place for God.

It doesn't seem like much is going on. Just go back and re-read Haggai. Your soul is going to be the residence place for God the Father and God the Son.

Go back and read John 15. If you have my words and you keep them, I and my Father will come to you. We will make our home in you.

That's the true indwelling of Jesus Christ and the Prince of Peace will come into your soul and to mine and we will have that salvation that comes from God that we strive for in the things that we do day by day. Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for this wonderful promise.

We thank you for the provisions of the new covenant in Christ's blood of which we are all partakers. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will cause these things to live in our souls and that we will take heart as we seek righteousness and purity and a walk with you day by day. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.