

## **Saved From the Flood**

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**Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis Series**

**Genesis 6-8**

I have been doing a series here at Vineyard from the early chapters of the book of Genesis – a series I have called “Roots.” I took a break last week, but my lovely wife spoke in my place. She did, in my totally objective opinion, a really great job. I serve on the National Board for the Vineyard churches. We have about 550 Vineyard churches in America and we are part of an association. So I was away the week before to participate on the National Board.

But we are going to return to our study of Genesis this week. We will be looking at the story of Noah and the flood. There is a verse that sets up the decision by God to flood the world with water. We read in Genesis 6:11, “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.’”

The earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.

I read a very disturbing story in Friday’s Columbus Dispatch. It was about four 12 year olds down in Florida. These four 7<sup>th</sup> graders - who the police say video taped themselves viciously attacking one of the boys’ 78 year old great-grandmother, who was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease - the

tape shows the boys hitting this poor, absolutely defenseless, elderly woman who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease with shoes, pillows, lamps, shelves and other objects. They curse her. They knock her to the ground and keep hitting her to keep her on the ground. On the tape she is covering her head and screaming, "Leave my house. Leave my house." Apparently the boys, over several months when they didn't have anything to do, would go over to this one boy's great-grandmother and simply harass her as a kind of sport, as a form of entertainment. They would toss things at her and mock her and push her around. It was all just a big game. That's what one of the boys said. It was just a game.

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence," the author of Genesis wrote.

The earth was corrupt.

In the same newspaper that reported the story of these four boys, who tormented and abused a 78-year old woman suffering from Alzheimer's, there was a story of a 41-year old woman here in Ohio, who was arrested because she hired a stripper for her teenager's party. Her teenager was having a party and so this mom thought it might be fun to hire a stripper for the party. The police came over at 2:00 a.m. because there were cars blocking the road where this woman lived. And there were teens outside and inside the house drinking and smoking pot. And the typical reaction of the 16 year olds who were there was, "I don't know what the big deal was." That's what one kid said. "I don't know what the big deal was." Yes, she stripped naked, but it wasn't like she did anything really awful.

The earth was corrupt and full of violence in the days of Noah.

There are some very disturbing trend lines in 21<sup>st</sup> century American culture. One is a move to the violent and the sensual – the growing public demand and appetite for the violent and the sensual. It is interesting that in the first two chapters of Genesis, there is a sanctity, a sacredness that God places upon life and upon sexuality. He blesses the gift of life and he blesses the gift of sexuality as it is expressed in the husband/wife relationship at the end of Genesis 2. And what you see in the growing corruption of society is that the two things that God declares to be sacred and he blesses, namely life and sexuality, become distorted. There is this growing movement, this appetite and demand for violence, smashing the sanctity of life, and for sensuality, smashing the sanctity of sexuality.

Football is not violent enough. It is not enough that occasionally men are carried off the field on a stretcher, and some have been paralyzed. People are not hit hard enough, apparently, for some Americans, so they are starting a new league – the XFL. The X stands for extreme. It is going to be more bloody and more violent than pro football. The X, according to the league owner, stands for x-rated. The promoter promises cheerleaders like you have never seen them before. The violent and the sensual.

The earth was corrupt in God's sight and full of violence.

But there are always going to be people who say, "Aw...come on. Everything is as it always was and always will be. People have always had problems." You can always find media apologists, whom they trot out in front of some congressional hearing and who says, "We are simply reflecting

the culture. Things aren't so bad." Any criticism or concern is really the result of an overly puritanical, prudish unwillingness to be liberated.

Jesus said it would be like this. That there would be people who claimed that everything is normal, even while there is this continual movement toward the violent and the sensual. He says in Luke 17:26, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the Ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."

Life is just going on as it has always gone on. We need to concern ourselves with dinner and where we are going to go today for dinner. Our major concern is how we are going to be entertained this afternoon or this evening. We have our families to worry about and our jobs to go to. Everything is normal, status quo, AOK. Except that the Lord sees something different. Genesis 6 says that the earth was corrupt in God's sight and full of violence. Everything is not AOK. Everything is not normal. And as Jesus said, "then the flood came."

Today I am going to talk about Noah and the Flood. It is one of the favorite Bible stories of children: A man being saved from a flood by taking his family and a bunch of animals into an Ark. I have called today's talk, "Saved from the Flood." Let's pray.

Genesis 6:9 – 7:6

*This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all*

*the people on the earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."*

*Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

*The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."*

*And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth.*

In 2 Peter 2, we are told that during the time that Noah was building the ark, he kept telling people that the flood was going to come. But people didn't listen. They didn't believe this preacher of righteousness. They mocked him. They laughed. They said, "We've never seen a flood of the proportion that you are talking about. No flood is coming. We are just going to keep on keeping on, focus our attention on growing our businesses, cooking our meals, buying our clothes, decorating our houses." Decade after decade Noah preached, "A flood is coming. A flood is coming." But no one listened.

It was that way in the day of Jesus. He prophesied about the Romans coming and destroying the city of Jerusalem, sacking the Temple. And unless the people pursued what he called "the things that made for peace," a flood was going to come and wash them away. But no one listened.

And when individuals today issue a warning to a friend, to a child, to a spouse, when people say, "Look, you are standing near the edge of a cliff. If you keep going in the same direction, there is going to be a time when God just lets you fall." You can't just keep sinning against God and have life go well for you. If you keep dancing near the edge of the cliff, there is going to be a time when God will lift his protection and let you fall.

Marlene and I have led a teen Bible study in our home for about five years on Wednesday nights for juniors and seniors. By the way, if you are a junior or senior in high school, you are invited to come out to our home on Wednesday evenings for Bible study. I always tell the kids in the group, "You can ask me anything." Some of the discussions are pretty free wheeling. We have a very good time together. Marlene serves great snacks.

One of the teens this week was talking about a friend who was really shaken up because their car kept breaking down on the highway and their friend was petrified that they would get in an accident. Things really come into focus when you are in the hospital, when you are going in for an operation, when you are in a car accident, when someone you know has been severely injured. Things come into great focus at those moments. The question this teen in our group was asking was, “Are you prepared to die?”

It is a question preachers have asked their congregations for centuries. Are you prepared to die? Are you ready for the flood that is going to come – your own death and then the flood of God’s judgment? My son got serious about the Lord after one of his fiends got struck by a car and nearly killed. We were in the hospital. When we saw her wheeled in, covered with blood, you couldn’t recognize her. The near death of a friend woke him up to his need for God.

Some people say, “Well, there never was any flood. The story of Noah was just a myth. There never was any flood and so there never will be any flood.”

There is a very lively debate in evangelical circles about whether the flood of Noah flooded the entire world – Australia, North America, South America, all of Asia – or whether it was localized around Mesopotamia. Some of the language in Genesis 7 seems to point to a flood that covered the entire world. It says that the waters rose under the entire heavens and every living thing on the face of the earth died.

The folks who believe that the Genesis flood was clearly universal in scope would not only point to what we read, what seems to be the plain meaning of the text here in Genesis 7, but they would point to the fact that paleontologists have found evidence of marine life in the most bizarre places on the planet. There is evidence of marine life way up on Mount Everest. There has been evidence of marine life found in Kansas and in the Great Plains states. How did those fossils get there? Was there a time when water covered the earth?

Some people say that it is not necessary to believe in a flood that covered the world. The Hebrew word for world is the word “eretz”. It is a flexible word. It could mean the whole world or a part of the world – a country. Eretz is often used of a land. When it says that the waters covered the whole world, it could very well be translated “the waters covered the whole land.” It certainly wasn’t necessary for God to flood the whole world, if in fact, the spread of people had not dispersed over the whole world. It is quite possible that the spread of people had only gone so far as the boundaries of the Near Eastern world.

If you are interested in the subject of the evidence for the Genesis flood, we have at the bookstore a wonderful book by a scientist named Hugh Ross, who lectured at Cal Tech for many years, and has taught at a number of universities in the US. He wrote a best selling book called “The Fingerprint of God,” but he has also written a book called “The Genesis Question,” in which he deals with a lot of issues that arise from the book of Genesis. It is called “The Genesis Question.” We have a number of copies in the bookstore. What Hugh Ross argues for is a localized flood in the area of Mesopotamia, a flood large enough to destroy all of the people who were alive at the time except for Noah and his family and the animals he took into the ark.



But there is absolute scientific evidence for a major flood that wiped out cities and people in the ancient area we would call Mesopotamia – The Middle East. In fact, two secular scientists from Columbia University, by the name of Pittman and Ryan - they were Columbia University geologists - in 1998 wrote a book on Noah's Flood. You can pick it up at Barnes and Noble. But they say that there is clear geological evidence for a cataclysmic flood in the Black Sea region of the world about 7500 years ago. Tens of thousands of square miles were covered. Apparently, the Mediterranean Sea rose and it broke through the straits by Turkey. They estimate that something like 200 times the amount of water that goes over Niagara poured through this region for about two years. They found evidence that the Black Sea used to be a fresh water sea, but now it is much larger and it is salt water.

Was there a major catastrophic flood in the area that Noah lived in thousands of years ago, as reported in the book of Genesis? The geologists say there was. There is a debate about whether it covered the whole world or whether it covered just that area. But there was a flood. And when the earth becomes corrupt and full of violence, there will be a flood, not of water, but of judgment in the future.

As I said, some people say that this account of the flood is a myth. If you take one of the Bible literature classes at a university or they offer them as part of the Humanities program in high school for juniors and seniors, you will find out that in almost every culture in the world, there is an old myth or story about a flood. You find flood stories in Australia, among the Mandingos on the Ivory Coast in Africa. There are flood stories among Cheyenne Indians, in China, in Papua New Guinea, in the Fiji Islands. There are flood stories among the Hindus, on the upper Amazon, in

Scandinavia. The Greeks had a flood story in which Zeus decided to destroy the world by flood and a man and his wife were saved by floating away in a large chest.

The closest flood story to the one we have in Genesis is an old Babylonian flood story known as the Gilgamesh Epic. It is the story about how the gods decided to flood the earth. This man built a large, multi-story ship. He seals it with pitch and tar and he and his whole family are saved on this ship. The Gilgamesh Epic differs from the Genesis account in that when the waters rise, the gods in heaven flee in terror. They start climbing the staircase of heaven. I think that was an old Led Zeppelin song. We are climbing the stairway to heaven...

Anyway, you see this flood story, in some form or other, throughout the world's cultures. Interestingly, the farther the culture gets from Mesopotamia, the more distorted the story becomes. But it would seem to me that if there really was a flood, then somewhere back in the collective memory of mankind, transmitted through legends and tribal story tellers, but if there really was a flood, you should find a story of it everywhere.

And we do. We don't only have geological evidence for a massive flood in the ancient Middle East, but we also have these stories in all of the neighboring cultures, spilling out all over the world, of the gods flooding the earth and people being saved on some kind of a boat. This is not only a sign of humanity's collective memory of some event in the distant past, it is also a sign of the way that God, in grace, prepares people to receive the truth.

Listen to me now. If there really is a God as the Bible says there is, and this God cares about people, then it makes sense that he has been at work in the world through people's stories,

through their religions, through their myths, through their life circumstances, to prepare people to receive the true truth, the real truth, the absolute truth.

There is a fabulous book called “The Eternity in our Hearts,” which we also have in our bookstore, by Don Richardson. What Don Richardson, a missionary, did was to write about all the ways that God prepared people ahead of time to receive the gospel. For example, back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a man named Adoniram Judson, who landed in the Southeast Asian nation of Burma with a Bible under his arm to bear witness to the people of Burma. Well, he lived there seven years and learned the language. He only saw one convert in the first seven years. He was very discouraged. They were not really much interested in Christianity. But during that time he translated the Bible into Burmese.

Then there was a major breakthrough. Through his one convert he met some members of a tribe called the Karen people and these people had as part of their tribal folklore a story that spoke about a man who was light skinned, white, coming to them with a holy book – a book that they say their forefathers used to read, but then lost. It was a book that would tell them about a couple who used to live in a perfect garden, but then because they sinned against the Supreme God, were thrown out. It was a book that would report to them a story of a man who was saved from a great flood by building a boat that carried away the world’s animals.

When Judson began preaching to them from the book of Genesis, he met amazing receptivity and in the course of a couple of decades over 100,000 Karen people were won to Christ. They became missionaries to surrounding tribes in Burma who had similar stories in their pasts. So rather than saying that all of these myths and all these religions around the world are totally false, modern

missionaries look for the thousands of ways in which God has gone before us to sovereignly prepare people to receive the good news of Christ and his sacrifice for our sins on the cross.

This week I read over an email in which a woman in our congregation was talking about an encounter that I happened to have had with her brother. We were sitting in the café, our Vineyard café, talking about God and I used a fishing analogy. She wrote that her brother was an avid fisherman and the more I talked about fishing, the more God used that to reach into his heart and so that day he was saved.

How many people in this loveless, fatherless culture can be rescued simply by some men putting their arms around a young adult and becoming a father to the fatherless? Our fatherless generation has been sovereignly prepared by God to have a hunger for father. Some of you men can be that guy whom God uses to communicate his Fatherhood to the fatherless. Our motherless generation has been prepared by sovereign God to need women who will unconditionally love them, and by loving them to bring them to salvation.

People who are without absolutes, who are confused, have been sovereignly prepared to be hungry for truth. Truth that anchors the soul. Truth that builds a foundation upon which we can live life well.

Some people say, "Well, I can't believe in a God who would destroy the world through a flood. I can't believe in a God who would take an innocent life. I can't believe in a God who one day is going to make us all face him in judgment. The fact that there is a great flood coming, I can't believe in that kind of God."

Have you ever struggled with the reality that at some point in the past, God flooded the earth and caused many people to die? Do you ever wonder about some of the stories in the Old Testament of God overthrowing cities and nations like he did with Sodom and Gomorrah? How do we understand these things – the floods, the judgments, the fire that comes from the sky and burns up several cities?

It is important to remember that the judgment that came upon the world in Noah's day came to a world that was totally corrupt and full of violence. It was a world that even down to its young people had become accustomed to violence and whose consciences had become hard. Perhaps it was a world filled with people like those 7<sup>th</sup> graders, who made a game out of knocking down a 78 year old woman suffering from Alzheimer's and then video-taped it.

Whenever you read about one of God's judgments in the Bible, you ought to remind yourself of the corruption and hardness of the people who are being judged. Remember also that we are talking about a judgment that comes from God, not from a man or woman, or Florida Supreme Court, or the US Supreme Court. We are talking about something that comes from God. God is the one who created life. God is the one who owns life. It is a mistake when we say what is wrong for us also must be wrong for God. If it is wrong for me or you to take life, then it must be wrong for God to take life. The fact is, we didn't create life and we don't own it. But God made life. He owns it.

There is a philosopher named Norman Geisler, who had a helpful illustration. He said, "It is wrong for me to go into your yard and cut down your bushes or dig them up and transplant them because

I don't own the bushes in your yard. I didn't plant them there. But I can dig up the bushes in my yard and transplant them or throw them out because I own the bushes."

Well, we must remember that whenever God works in the world he is working in his own backyard. He owns the bushes. The Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." The truth is, God is sovereign over the whole world and all of life. He can take it if he wishes. We forget that God takes the life of every human being. Sometimes it may seem absolutely premature to us, but God takes the life of every human being. We call it death. The only question is when and how will God take the life of someone.

Whenever we read of judgment in the Bible, we also need to remember that God gives people plenty of opportunity to repent and escape judgment. He warns and warns and warns that a flood is coming. He sends his prophet Jonah to march through the city of Nineveh for 40 days saying in 40 days God is going to overthrow this city. He has Noah preaching for decades as he is standing on the scaffolding building this big boat that is sitting out in the middle of the desert somewhere. People were mocking him as Noah preached that a flood was coming. He waits 490 years to judge the Amalekites.

Before God judges, he warns. He tells us we are coming dangerously close to the edge of the cliff. Everyone I've ever talked with who blew their lives up will later tell me that God had spoken to them over and over again but they disregarded the warning. Has God been warning you about something? It is the desire and heart of God who judges to hold his hand back from judgment. That verse I read to you a few weeks ago, Psalm 30:5 "His anger lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts for a lifetime." God delights in saving, not judging.

“Well, I don’t know if I believe the Bible. It is full of myths. I don’t know if I believe that there is a judgment coming. I don’t know if I can believe in a God who does this or that.”

You today, friend, may have some doubts about God. Some of you are already Christians, but you have this large reservoir of doubt that holds you back from being radically committed to Christ. Some of you have never stepped over the line and yielded your life to Christ because you are being held back by some doubt. You don’t understand.

If you have a problem with God or the Bible or the flood of Noah, I say this with all affection, but the problem that you have with God or the Bible, is not necessarily on God’s end. Last summer my wife and I cut the cable on our TV again. Every summer we have done this for the last several years so that we have a summer free from TV. We figure that we watch enough during the rest of the year; let’s just take three months off and so we cut the cable. The antenna on our roof broke, so without cable or a new antenna, we get terrible reception in our house. We can’t even watch the normal 3-4 stations we get here in Columbus. Now, whenever we turn on the TV, we get snow on the TV.

Listen, when I see the fuzzy reception on my screen, I could conclude that the stations across Columbus have simultaneously experienced technical difficulties. When I see all that snow on my TV screen, I could simply start calling the TV stations and ask them what is going on. Something has happened to your signal. I could conclude that the problem is on the end of the sender, but probably the problem is on my end. Maybe, as I look at all that snow on my TV screen, the signal is being clearly sent, but I am not receiving it because something is wrong with me.

Don't you think it is a little arrogant to say that because you don't get something, because you don't understand something, because you don't see something, the problem must be with God or the Bible and you choose to not believe in God or in the Bible? Or not yield your life to Christ? Don't you think it is a little arrogant to say that the problem must be on their end, especially when millions and millions of people claim that they are getting the picture clearly? And there are thousands of people here sitting next to you in this room right now that claim they are getting the picture clearly.

May I suggest one reason why you may not be getting the picture about God or the Bible clearly? What is keeping your antenna system from working? You struggle with putting your faith to and in Christ. You struggle with hearing from God. You have trouble with stepping out and being bold in sharing your faith. I have found in talking to hundreds and hundreds of people and in looking at my life, that one of the major reasons why the picture doesn't come through clearly is an issue of control. It is not that the evidence of geology isn't there. It is not that God is unworthy of our worship. It is not that he hasn't done all that he needs to do in sending his son Jesus into the world to communicate to us clearly his nature and purpose.

The problem with the receiver – with me and with you – is we don't want to give up control. We have a cherished sin, a cherished relationship, a cherished behavior that we don't want to give up. We don't want Christ calling the shots. We don't want to be vulnerable, to be dependent, to be embarrassed or made to look foolish. We say the issue is intellectual, but over and over again, the issue is not intellectual, the issue is with our will. It is an issue of control. But you can yield control to God. You can. You can surrender today. You can say, "God, I'm willing to be weak and dependent if that's what it takes to see you more clearly."



Well, what saved Noah from the flood of God's judgment? It wasn't Noah's great ingenuity. It wasn't Noah's great skill in ship building or even the quality of the materials he used. The story of Noah is not a celebration of ship building or engineering or navigation or anything else that lies in human power. The story of Noah is a story of God's favor and grace that comes to men and women even in the midst of judgment. The story of Noah's ark is a story of God's grace that found a man.

And we read of the favor of God before we read of Noah building an ark. Look at v. 8: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." Noah found favor, he found grace, in the eyes of the Lord. Or as one interpreter of the Bible said, it is probably put not that Noah found God's grace, but God's grace found Noah. God's grace found Noah. Like the old line in the hymn, "It was not I that found O Savior true, no, I was found of thee."

Has the grace of God found you yet? Has Christ tracked you down? The good shepherd who seeks and saves that which is lost? Has grace found you recently – grace that forgives you, grace that cleanses you, grace that frees you?

God always takes the initiative in our lives. It is grace that kept Noah going through all the years of mocking and rejection by his neighbors. It was grace that kept Noah persevering. It was grace that energized Noah. It was grace that protected Noah when the flood of judgment fell on the world. And I love Genesis 7:16 where it says, "The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in." Underline that phrase – then the Lord shut him in.

John Calvin, the great Reformer, once said that the ark was made secure not by human ingenuity, but by divine miracle. The water was restrained not by the tar and the pitch, but rather by the secret power of God.

What keeps you from being swept away by the flood of this culture? By its relativism? By the flood of pornography on the internet? By the flood of divorce and selfishness and cruelty and violence and substance abuse? What keeps you from being swept up in this culture's love of money and passion for more and more stuff? What keeps you secure so you don't get swept away like a piece of Styrofoam going over Niagara Falls? What will keep your kids safe from the flood of drugs, or the flood of violence?

It is not our great ingenuity. It is not the fact that we are perfect parents. It is not the engineering of our families. Do you understand, friend, that if you are to be kept from the flood, this movement toward sensuality and violence, if your kids are going to be kept from the flood of pop culture, it's only by the grace of God. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. It's grace – sheer grace. You plead for grace for yourself. You plead for grace for your kids. You cry out for grace for your family and for grace for your parents. Grace upon the people in your office. For grace to find that kid in school that you are witnessing to.

And the thing about grace is that it shuts us in. God shut Noah and his family into the ark. Sometimes that's what grace feels like. It feels like we are shut in. Grace sometimes confines us to a narrow place, to a place where for a little while it seems stinky. Your teenager will say to you, "Why can't I date a non-Christian?" A single adult will often say, "What's wrong with me dating or

living with a non-Christian? All the Christian guys I know are like rhinos. They are big and smelly and lumber around. All the Christian girls look like ostriches. What is wrong with sailing outside the stinky old ark?”

I say this to young people. I say this to single adults. But grace sometimes will shut you in. It will feel confining. Grace sometimes feels restrictive. Grace sometimes feels limiting. But it is grace nonetheless when God holds you back from the edge of the cliff so that you don't have the freedom to go over; it's grace. When God says “no” to you, that's grace.

But it wasn't only invisible grace that preserved Noah. God used something from this world; he used the wood from trees. God instructed him to use pitch and tar. Maybe there was a tar pit near there. But God didn't just save Noah by his invisible hand, or invisible grace, God instructed Noah to construct an ark.

From the earliest days, Christians have seen the ark as a picture of the Christian church. They have said that the way that someone gets saved is not only by the invisible grace of God, but by running into the ark, by running into the church. I have told this story before, but there was a pastor who preached in one of those small fishing villages in Massachusetts. One day he was walking along the streets. He had his little pastor's collar on and some local guys decided to have a little fun with him. One of the men thought he was pretty shrewd. He said, “Pastor, do I have to go to church to be saved? Are you telling me I have to be in a church to be saved?”

The pastor said, “No, you don't have to be in a church to be saved, but it works this way. See those boats down there in the harbor? If I wanted to go to England, I could get in one of those little

boats and row out by myself and I might get to England, if my boat wasn't capsized by a storm along the way and if I didn't die of sunstroke, and if I wasn't attacked by sharks, and if I didn't starve to death or die of thirst, or lose my way and end up somewhere where I didn't want to go. I might on my own make it to England. But I'll tell you what, I would have a whole lot better time making it to England if got on one of those big ocean liners down there.

You might, friend, escape the flood of this culture on your own. But I doubt it. We Christians are like salmon trying to swim upstream, against the current. By yourself you will almost certainly be washed away.

I frequently talk to people who are going through a profoundly difficult time – folks who have marital problems who are going through a divorce, who are separated, who are experiencing job difficulties, people with various kinds of addictions, and after talking with them for a little while and offering counsel, I often say to them, “Are you really involved here at the church? Are you connected with a small group?” I almost feel bad asking the question because I don't want someone to think I am trying to sell them a program. I don't want you to hear that today – that I am trying to sell you a program like one of our groups. I am not trying to sell a program when I talk about small groups or when I talk about getting more involved in the church. I just know, everything in the Bible tells me this, and everything in my 27 years of being a Christian tells me this, and everything in the thousands of people that I have talked with, who are going through problems tells me this – I have never met an unattached, isolate person who wasn't swept away by the flood of this culture. Never.

I believe it is virtually impossible to get saved unless you make your way into the ark of the church. You cannot live the kind of life that Jesus described for Christians, you cannot experience the peace of God - the joy that he has, the freedom, the forgiveness, the healing – you can't have what we read about in the Bible, unless you make your way into the ark of the church and are surrounded by other Christians.

Just this past Thursday I had two encounters with other Christians; without them I could have drifted off track. A dear friend of mine exhorted me about my parenting. It was very, very encouraging. I took her words to heart. I sat down with a pastor from another church in this city and when we were done eating, when he was going to say "good-bye" he looked me in the eye and said, "Rich, don't blow it. I am praying for you. And there are pastors around this city praying for you because they see the favor of God on your church and on your life. Don't blow it. I mean it. Don't blow it." Both were exhortations and were so important to me. I need to be connected to other Christians to live the kind of life that God wants me to live, and so do you.

Noah was saved from the flood by the grace of God. Noah was saved from the flood by running into the ark. And Noah was saved because he was obedient to God in the details. The secret of his success was not that he was a moral person.

Look at, finally, Genesis 6:22, "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." And Genesis 7:5, "And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him." What God found in Noah was a man who would obey him.

## Saved From the Flood

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Rich Nathan

December 9-10, 2000

Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis Series

Genesis 6-8

### I. Why are Some People Swept Away?

A. "No Flood is Coming!"

B. "The Bible is Full of Myths!"

C. "I Can't Believe in a God Who..."

### II. Why are Some People Saved?

A. God's Grace

1. Grace that Finds

2. Grace that "Shuts Us In" (Gen. 7:16)

B. The Ark (Gen. 7:13-23)

C. Noah's Obedience (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16)