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STANDING ALONE

Genesis 6:9-22

By

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Genesis Lesson 16

Standing Alone Genesis 6:9-22

To be faithful as a Christian in an evil day, you must learn to stand alone. You will repeatedly face pressure to violate your Christian standards and go along with the crowd. As a Christian teenager, you're with some friends who are passing around a joint. What will you do when it comes to you? All the other kids are experimenting with sex and talking about their adventures. Will you go along with the crowd? Everyone has an illegal copy of an upcoming test. Will you join them in cheating?

Christian adults also face constant pressure to compromise their faith. At work, the boss expects you not to be totally honest in dealing with customers. On a business trip, your associates are all going to a porno movie and want you to join them. At family gatherings over the holidays, the rest of the family are gossiping about another family member. They're telling off-color jokes. What do you do?

No one likes to be ridiculed or rejected. We all want to be liked and included. We don't want others to think that Christians are a bunch of prudes who can't enjoy life. So we're easily tempted to go along with the crowd rather than to stand alone for Jesus Christ. But if we yield, we dishonor God and lose our distinctive witness for our Savior.

There is probably no greater example of a man who stood alone with God in an evil day than Noah. God, who sees the heart of every person, saw fit to save only Noah and his family. All others perished in the flood. Think of what it would be like to be the only godly family on earth! Noah's life teaches us that ...

To stand alone in an evil day we must walk with God.

"Noah walked with God" (6:9). That phrase is used only of Enoch (5:22, 24), Noah, and the godly priests (Mal. 2:6). It is the secret of standing alone in an evil day. The first thing we learn is that ...

1. Standing alone is necessary because we live in an evil day.

Through repetition, the text underscores several points. Twice (6:11, 12) it mentions that the corruption on earth was *in the sight of God*. In the sight of men, things weren't so bad. As we've seen, they were making great strides in many areas. They viewed themselves as progressive; but God viewed them as putrid. It is God's view, not man's, that matters. We only learn God's view in His Word. Three times the text repeats that the earth was *corrupt* (6:11, 12), meaning morally degraded. The Hebrew word "corrupt" means to destroy. Derek Kidner puts it, "... what God decided to 'destroy' (13) had been virtually self-destroyed already" (*Genesis* [IVP], p. 87). Twice it is said that the earth was filled with *violence* (6:11, 13). Moral degradation and violence go together. When people cast off God's standards for right and wrong, self becomes the standard. Self grabs whatever it can get, regardless of others. Violence is the gruesome result. Because of the degree of moral degradation and violence, God wiped out everything through the flood.

This text is especially applicable to us, because Jesus said that just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days prior to His return (Matt. 24:37-39). People were going on about life oblivious to God, "eating and drinking, ... marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away." They were living without regard to God and His impending judgment. What a description of our time!

The frightening thing is that there were grandchildren of the godly Enoch who were swept away in the flood. They knew about God. Perhaps some of them even claimed to know God. But they had blended in so much with the evil around them that they didn't listen to God's repeated warnings of judgment.

When Jesus returns, there are going to be many who claim to know Him, even those who have prophesied and cast out demons and done miracles in His name, who will say to Him, "Lord, Lord," but He will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23). They thought they knew Jesus, but Jesus didn't know them because they blended in with the

wickedness of the end times! It's not easy, but we must stand alone because we live in an evil day!

2. Standing alone is possible because Noah did it.

"Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time" (6:9). The word *righteous* is used in two ways in the Bible. It is used of the righteousness of faith, that is, of *imputed righteousness* (Rom. 3:21-4:25). When a person trusts in Christ as his sin-bearer, God credits the righteousness of Jesus Christ to his account. We know that Noah had been justified by faith because Hebrews 11:7 says that his obedience in building the ark shows that he was "an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

But the word *righteous* is also used of the *right conduct* which stems from being justified (declared righteous) by faith. It means "conformity to a standard" and points to the observable behavior of those who live by God's revealed standards of right and wrong. When verse 9 says that Noah was righteous, it is referring to this type of righteousness. It would be wrong to say that Noah found favor with God (6:8) because he was a righteous man. Rather, because he was the object of God's undeserved favor, he lived a righteous life. His faith showed itself in good works and moral behavior. That's *always* God's order--grace first, then saving faith, then good deeds (Eph. 2:8-10).

Noah was not only righteous, but also *blameless*, which means "complete" or "whole," that Noah had integrity. The phrase "in his time [or, generations]" means that Noah's contemporaries viewed him that way. Many of them probably thought he was crazy, but they couldn't deny that he lived what he believed. That Noah was righteous and blameless does not mean that he was perfect. He sinned just as we do. But Noah confessed his sin to God and he obeyed God. Noah's righteousness and blamelessness are summed up in the words, "Noah walked with God."

The text probably repeats the names of Noah's three sons in verse 10 (see 5:32) to remind us of the effect that Noah's godly life had on them. They easily could have been influenced to leave their father in his crazy project of building this ocean liner on dry ground and to blend in with the world. The reason they stayed with

Noah and got on board the ark was that they saw in their father a life that rang true.

If we want children who learn to stand alone in our evil day, we've got to be parents who live our convictions, as Noah did. Kids are smart; they read our lives much more than our lectures. They can smell phoniness a mile off, and they want no part of it. But if they see reality with God in us, there is a much better chance that they will stand alone against the tide of ungodliness in our times.

Standing alone is hard in any day. But Noah's example proves that it is possible. But how do we do it? A step at a time.

3. Standing alone is achieved by walking with God.

As we saw with Enoch, walking with God implies faith in God, obedience to God, and fellowship with God. With Noah's walk with God, three things shine through: faith, obedience, and perseverance. First, faith:

A. Walking with God begins and continues through faith in God's Word.

Like Enoch, Noah is listed in the faith "Hall of Fame" in Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Note two aspects of Noah's faith:

(1) *Faith in God's Word concerns the unseen.* Noah was warned about "things not yet seen." God threatened to destroy the wicked and promised to save Noah and his family through the ark (Gen. 6:13-18). All this was in the future. Noah had no tangible signs to verify that this would happen. All he had was God's word. But he built his whole life around it. Alexander Maclaren writes, "The far-off flood was more real to him than the shows of life around him. Therefore he could stand all the gibes, and gave himself to a course of life which was sheer folly unless that future was real" (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], p. 54).

Could you say that about your life--that it is sheer folly unless heaven and hell are real? We've gotten away from this. We empha-

size the present benefits of being a Christian. Christianity is being marketed as a product that can do everything from help you lose weight to make you a successful salesman. But you won't stand alone in our evil day unless by faith you are staking everything on what God says about future judgment.

(2) *Faith assumes that we hear and know God's Word.* Hearing and knowing what God said, Noah acted upon it. We have God's written Word. But if you don't know the Word, it won't have any effect on your daily attitudes, behavior, and relationships. Let's say you watch one hour of TV each day (the national average is three hours per day!), plus a weekly movie. You spend another hour daily reading the newspaper and various magazines. Plus, you spend time listening to the radio while driving, etc. You read your Bible once or twice a week for 10-15 minutes. It doesn't take a Ph.D. to figure out what is going to influence your life the most! We are so bombarded with the world! You won't stand alone against the evil of our day unless your intake of the Word is sufficient to offset your intake of the world.

I urge you to saturate yourself with the Bible every way you can. Get it on tape and play it while you drive. Read it daily, asking God to give you His wisdom on how to live in this evil day. Memorize key verses so that God can bring them to mind when you're tempted to sin.

B. Walking with God requires complete obedience to God's Word.

Twice we are told that Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him (6:22; 7:5). When you think about it, what the Lord commanded him was incredible. Can you imagine Noah telling Mrs. Noah that he was going to build a ship 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high? You hear about guys who build a fishing boat in their back yard, but this was ridiculous! This wasn't a weekend hobby; it was a full-time job for 120 years! Most of us would have argued with the Lord: "It's not feasible! It's not logical! It's too costly! It will take too long!" But no matter how difficult, illogical, or costly, Noah did "according to all that God had commanded him." Walking with God requires that kind of complete obedience.

The task God gave Noah was enormous. If you parked the ark on the street out front, it would go from the corner of Benton to the Beaver Street Brewery. The street is 30 feet wide, so it would be two and a half times the width of the street. And it would be three stories high! In fact, as far as we know, it was not until 1858 that a vessel of greater length was built: the "Great Eastern," which was 692 by 83 by 30 feet (James Boice, *Genesis* [Zondervan], p. 262]). While the ark was a floating box, not a pleasure craft, studies have shown that its proportions are ideal for a seaworthy vessel. How would Noah or anyone else at that time have known how to build such a large seaworthy vessel apart from revelation from God?

Critics have called Noah's ark a myth, saying that it would be impossible to fit all the known species of animals in such a vessel. If you're interested in a detailed treatment, I refer you to *The Genesis Flood* [Baker], by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, two scientists who show that it is not incredible. We don't know exactly what the Bible means by the word "kind" in reference to the animals (6:20). It could refer to families of animals, from which the various species could later develop. The Bible is clear that God created the various kinds of animals distinct from one another, but there could have been change within the kinds. Authorities on taxonomy estimate that there are less than 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians alive today. Even if that number is doubled to allow for extinct species, the ark would need to hold about 75,000 animals. Given the dimensions of the ark, it easily could hold as many as 125,000 animals the size of a sheep. Since the average size of land animals is less than that of a sheep, no more than 60 percent of the ark would be needed to hold the animals, with the rest being used for food and water storage (Morris, *The Genesis Record* [Baker], p. 185).

As for the problem of how Noah went about collecting all these species, verse 20 indicates that God caused the animals to come to him. That's a miracle, but certainly God could do it. As for how Noah could have collected food for all those animals and fed them all on board, it is possible that God caused the animals to go into a type of hibernation so that they didn't require as much food and water (Whitcomb & Morris, p. 71). Also, it is possible that, as will be the case in the millennium, the carnivorous animals ate grass

before the flood. We don't know, but it is not impossible. (Man was vegetarian before the flood.) At any rate, the story is not incredible or mythological. There are reasonable explanations for the many problems.

We don't know the meaning of "gopher wood" (6:14; NIV = "cypress"). But the Hebrew word for "gopher" as well as the word "pitch" (tar that Noah covered the wood with) both come from the Hebrew root word for "atonement," which means "to cover." So you could say that those who were protected by the "atonement" wood and "atonement" pitch were delivered from God's judgment.

As such, the ark is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as everyone who was on the ark was saved and everyone not on the ark was lost, so everyone who, in the obedience of faith, has put himself under the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ will be saved from God's future judgment; everyone who is outside of Christ will be lost. It doesn't depend on one person being better or worse than another person. There were probably some nice people who didn't get on board the ark. There are some wonderful people who have never trusted in Christ for salvation. It all depends on whether you are "on board" or not, covered from God's judgment by the means He has ordained.

If Noah had said, "I believe what God says about the coming flood," but he hadn't followed through in obedience, he would not have been saved. If he had started, but got tired of the whole thing and quit part way through, he would not have been saved. He and his family were saved from the flood because he obeyed God completely. In our day there is a false security being offered to people under the label of eternal security. Somebody prays to receive Christ and we tell them that they are saved and eternally secure. They may be; but they may not be. If there is no subsequent change in terms of obedience to God, there's reason to doubt the reality of their salvation. We are saved by grace through faith apart from works, but faith that saves works. The proof of your faith is your obedience.

Walking with God begins and continues by faith in God's Word; it requires complete obedience to God's Word.

C. Walking with God requires perseverance.

The metaphor of walking suggests the long haul. You may run for short distances, but if you need to go far, walking is more effective. God warned Noah of the impending judgment and told him to start building the ark 120 years before the flood (Gen. 6:3). By faith Noah started working and kept going. When his sons were old enough, they helped him. Noah just kept on until it was done.

The New Testament says that he was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). He preached righteousness for 120 years and didn't have a single convert. It is likely that he had many scoffers. It must have been a favorite pastime to go over and watch old Noah working on his ark. It probably had never rained yet on the earth (Gen. 2:6). Everyone must have thought Noah was bonkers to spend his life building an ocean liner on dry ground on an earth that didn't know rain! The pressure to quit would have been tremendous. Yet he kept plodding on.

It's easy to make a profession of being a Christian. It's not too difficult to remain a Christian for a few months or even a few years. But it's another matter to walk with God through the years in spite of trials, hardships, ridicule, and no visible results. We need what has been called "a long obedience in the same direction." We need perseverance!

Conclusion

Let me put it plainly: If you don't consistently spend time alone with God in His Word and in prayer, *you don't have a walk with God!* If you don't have a walk with God, you will not be able to stand alone as Noah did. You will be more conformed to this evil world than you are to Jesus Christ. Peter writes that just as the early world was destroyed by the flood, so "the present heavens and earth by [God's] word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:7). His conclusion is, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (3:11).

If you worked for a company that you knew was going to be dissolved by bankruptcy, your attitude toward that company would change. You wouldn't put your future hopes in it, because it has no future. If you heard that the government was going to shut down a

bank because of insolvency, you wouldn't rush to invest your money in that bank. God has said that this evil world is doomed. He has promised "a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). Like Noah, we must redirect everything in our lives--our time, our money, our goals--in light of God's warning of judgment and His promise of deliverance in Christ. We must stand alone in this evil day by walking with God.

Discussion Questions

1. We're called to be in the world but not of the world. But are there situations where we must isolate ourselves from the world? When and how?
2. How can a Christian know if it is right to join in a particular activity? How can we gracefully abstain when necessary?
3. How can we help our children to stand alone? Which activities should we forbid them to participate in? When should we let them make up their own minds?
4. How can a person know that he is "on the ark"? In other words, how can we have assurance that Christ is truly our Savior?

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