

Christians at Texas State Bible Study—Genesis #14

The Line of Life with Noah (3)

Living and Working Together with the Lord to Work Out Our Own Salvation

Scripture Reading: Gen. 6:8, 14-16; 7:1, 13; Phil. 2:12-16, 1:19; 1 Pet. 3:20-21

Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah. **14** Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make rooms in the ark and shall cover it within and without with pitch. **15** And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. **16** You shall make an opening for light for the ark, and you shall finish it up to a cubit from the top; and you shall put the entrance of the ark in its side; you shall make it with lower, second, and third stories.

Gen.7:1 Then Jehovah said to Noah, Come into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. **13** On that very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark.

Phil. 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; **13** For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for *His* good pleasure. **14** Do all things without murmurings and reasonings **15** That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world, **16** Holding forth the word of life, so that I may have a boast in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 3:20 Who had formerly disobeyed when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared; *entering* into which, a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water. **21** Which *water*, as the antitype, also now saves you, *that is*, baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the last two Bible studies we saw a marvelous picture of Noah, one whose life and work changed the age. The Lord is burdened to gain a group of people on the earth who would be the overcomers and give themselves to Him so that their life and work would change this age. We need to be those people. It is a very tremendous and serious yet wonderful matter that God would choose people to be the age-changing people. We also saw that in order for a person to be one whose life and work change the age, God must give him a revelation of the corrupt age in which he is living. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:37 that "just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be." We feel, and historic prophecy tells us, that we are in the last days and that the time of the Lord's coming is very close.

"But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah." At the darkest time, after the enemy had done his best to damage humankind and had brought humankind to the bottom, God still had someone. If we are going to have a life that changes this age, we need to find grace, and be filled with grace. What, or who, is grace? Grace is actually a marvelous person-God Himself. Grace is the very presence of God enjoyed by us to be everything to us and to do everything in us, through us, and for us.

Enter All the Way In

In this Bible study we want to see that like Noah, we must live and work together with the Lord in order to work out our own salvation. On the one hand, we are saved, but on the other hand, we are still being saved. On the one hand, we have been eternally saved, but on the other hand, we still need to work out our salvation, that is, bring our salvation to its ultimate conclusion. This is what it means to work out our own salvation. Salvation is the wonderful person of the Triune God who has been dispensed into us. Now we need to carry out this salvation and bring it to its ultimate conclusion.

Every day we need to work out our own salvation because what we work out is what we build, and what we build is what will turn the age and save us from this crooked and perverted generation. What we build is also what we will enter into. If we do not build the ark, if Christ is not built into our being and us into His being, and if we do not work out our own salvation, then we will have nothing to enter into when God's judgment comes upon this corrupt earth. When the door of the ark closes, then the judgment will come. As we cooperate with God to build up the Body and the New Jerusalem, we are building the ark. This is what we are doing, and this is what is happening as we are being prepared to be Christ's bride.

We need to enter into the deepest and highest intimacy with our Triune God so that He can bring us to the "third story" to show us His mysteries, secrets, and hidden treasures (1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Cor. 2:10; Exo. 33:11). The ark was of three stories, the lower, the second, and the third (6:16). The first, second, and third stories signify the height of the ark. The three sections of the tabernacle signify the depths into which we all must enter. The three stories of the ark signify the height which we all must attain. In one sense we are getting deeper, and in another sense we are getting higher. Noah and his family were in the deepest and highest intimacy with the Triune God, and we also need to enter into the deepest and highest intimacy with our Triune God so that He can bring us to the "third story" and show us His mysteries, secrets, and hidden treasures. First Corinthians 2:9 tells us that there are things "which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him." We need to give ourselves to love the Lord with our whole being. Then we will be like Paul, who did everything in the index of the Lord's eyes. We will also be like Moses, who was the Lord's companion and with whom the Lord spoke face to face. This is the kind of person we need to become in order to bring the Lord back.

Noah's entering into the ark is a type of our entering into Christ (John 3:16; Gal. 3:27). Our believing into Christ and being baptized into Christ were our entering into Christ as the ark. A person has the freedom to decide whether or not to enter into Christ. However, once a person makes the decision to enter into Christ, there is no way out. Sometimes we may wish that there was a way out of Christ. However, there is water all around us. Thank the Lord that there is no way out of Christ.

Once we believe into the Lord Jesus, we are "shut in" by God with no way to get out of Him (cf. John 10:28-29; Psa. 139:7-12). The Lord says in John 10:28-29, "I give to them eternal life, ... and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." Thus, we are being held by two hands-the Lord's hand and the Father's hand. No one can snatch us out of the Triune God's hands. We can never get away from Christ or the Father. Sometimes we are happy to be in His hands, but sometimes we would like to get away. This is why David says in Psalm 139:7-8, "Where shall I go, away from Your Spirit, / And where shall I flee from Your presence? / If I ascend into heaven, You are there; / If I make my bed in Sheol, there You are." Sometime we feel like running away from the Lord. However, the Lord is everywhere; it is impossible to escape from Him. We may think to ourselves, "I will go to Sheol. The Lord will not be in Sheol." However, He will be there waiting for us. Once we are shut in, there is no way out. This is a real mercy. When I consider all the times that I tried to get out, I am glad that I could not get out.

The ark's passing through the water of death and coming to rest on the mountains of Ararat is a type of Christ's passing through death and resurrecting out of death (cf. Exo. 12:2, 6). Genesis 8:4 tells us that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. After forty days and nights of rain, the waters finally began to abate, and the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, which means "holy ground." The ark rested on holy ground on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. Then if we look at Exodus 12, we see that when the Lord instituted the Passover, He changed the Israelites' calendar, making the seventh month the first month. He charged them to slay the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of this first month. If we look at the Gospels, we see that the Lord Jesus was slain on that exact day-the fourteenth day of the first month, which used to be the seventh month. He

was the real Passover Lamb.

Then three days later, on the seventeenth day of the month, He resurrected. Thus, Christ resurrected on the seventeenth day of the first month, which used to be the seventh month—the same day that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Surely this is no mistake. The very day and month that Christ rose from the dead was the very day and month that the ark landed on the mountains of Ararat. Thus, the ark is a picture of Christ passing through death and resurrecting out of death. If you have believed into the Lord but have not been baptized, you need to be baptized. You need to pass through the waters of baptism so that everything related to this crooked and perverted generation in you can be submerged in the death of Christ. Then you will come up in resurrection and will rest on holy ground. You will be in a new age, a new realm, and you will walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). This is what it means to be baptized.

God's Complete Salvation

To receive salvation by faith is once for all; to work out our own salvation, to carry it out, bring it to its ultimate conclusion, is lifelong (Phil. 2:12-16). Once we believe and are baptized, we still need to be saved further. We need to work out our own salvation and we need to walk in newness of life. Every day we need to work out our own salvation.

We are saved from murmurings and reasonings by the inner operating Triune God to shine as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation for His good pleasure (vv. 13-15). This is a practical salvation. It is the same kind of salvation as in Philippians 1:19. This salvation sustains and strengthens us by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ to live Christ for His magnification. This salvation is that we may magnify Christ and live Christ. This is the salvation we need to work out; that is, we must live out Christ. However, what are we saved from practically? Rather, we are saved from murmurings and reasonings. A murmur is a muffled sound. It implies muttering, complaining, grumbling, and fault-finding. We are complainers, grumblers, and fault-finders. We always find someone else to find fault with, but never ourselves. We need to be saved from this.

How can we be saved from this? We can be saved by the inner operating Triune God. Phil. 2: 13 says, "For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." The Greek word for *operates* literally means "energizes." It is God who energizes us and operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. He operates in us so that we are one with Him in His will to choose what He wants us to choose and so that we are one with Him outwardly to act according to His actions. We need to cooperate with the inner operating God. When we do this, we shine as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation for His good pleasure. Verse 15 shows us that this crooked and perverted generation is just like Noah's generation. We need to work out our own salvation and be saved from murmuring and reasoning by the inner operating Triune God. When we enjoy His energizing within us, we shine as luminaries in the world.

To work out our own salvation is to hold forth the word of life, which is to apply, present, and offer the word of life to the world by living out Christ; this is our building work (v. 16; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 6:63; 1 John 1: 1- 2; 1 Cor. 14:4b). Every day we need to apply, present, and offer the word of life to people by living out Christ. Every day we should live Him out and speak Him out as well. We need to preach the gospel. Our speaking should match our living, and our living should match our speaking. A brother once said, "Preach the gospel at all times; use words if necessary." This means that our living out of Christ is the gospel. Our words should match our living, and our living should match our words.

First John 1:1 says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." When we report the Word of life which we have seen, heard, enjoyed, and touched, then our words have impact. In Acts 5:20, after an angel came and released Peter and the apostles from prison, the angel told Peter, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." Peter's life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out. We need to enjoy the Lord so much that if an angel were to look at us, he would say, "I want you to speak the words of this life." May all these points become our living experience, and may we live and work together with the Lord to work out our own salvation to build the ark and to turn this age into the age of the kingdom.