

“Walking With God”

Genesis 6:5-9

January 3, 2021

Today we begin a new series: **“Founding Fathers: Patriarchs, Promises, and the People of God”**

What is it about a fresh start we love so much? 2021—a new year! Will it be better than 2020? How can it not be?

Picture—this was someone’s clever depiction of Christmas in 2020! For some of us, I have no doubt in my mind, 2021 is going to be a better year. Why do I say this? (Osteen?) Is it because I’m convinced politicians are going to turn over a new leaf and no longer lie or obfuscate? No! Is it because anarchists and antifa are going to stop their violence and start teaching Sunday School? No! Is it because Hollywood will curtail their vulgarity and only make movies that ennoble rather than degrade human beings? No! Is it because colleges and universities will quit deceiving young adults with the idea cosmic justice is within reach if they will just accept a form of righteousness, which has nothing to do with God, and everything to do with radical self-justifying identity politics? No! Is it because Covid-19 will wither away with the administration of a more effective vaccination policy? No!

Why then might I be convinced 2021 could actually be a better year for some of us? I believe 2021 could turn out to be a better year because this could be the year in which those of

us who are following Jesus are going to see (maybe more clearly than ever before in our lifetime)

2021: Our relationship with God can thrive regardless of what is happening around us!

To see why this can happen I'd like you to turn to one of the most familiar stories in the Bible—Noah and the flood—a story in which we tend to sometimes overlook the fact that Noah walked with God in the middle of mayhem! Gen. 6:9

Genesis 6:9 (ESV)

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

No doubt a catastrophic flood took place! Every civilization of the Ancient Near East where civilization itself began had a flood story. Sumer, Mesopotamia, Moses and the Children of Israel—they all had their flood stories. But the difference between what God revealed to Moses and the other flood stories such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, is that in what was revealed to Moses, God made it clear He was destroying the world for moral reasons—because of wickedness and corruption.

In one surviving version of Gilgamesh, gods and goddesses destroy the world because humans were making too much noise and they couldn't sleep! In the non-biblical flood stories human beings are on a quest to gain immortality! In Gilgamesh the gods and goddesses are quarreling and are themselves horrified by the forces of nature they arbitrarily unleash. In Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim, the lone survivor both designs and controls his ship. In what God reveals to Moses, God designs the ark and is in total control. Noah doesn't end up a god!

The Biblical story of the flood reveals that we live in a moral universe, and that God will not tolerate evil forever. This should be comforting to us, and we should be reminded this word "comfort" is one of the meanings of Noah's name! Let's look at our verse again:

Genesis 6:9 (ESV) These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

**What does it mean to walk with God? (Ps. 1)
To walk with God is to listen, trust, and obey!**

Many times we talk about being in relationship with God or in relationship with God through His

Son Jesus Christ, and I really have nothing against the use of this term “relationship.” But I wonder if sometimes it can become a bit fuzzy or foggy, and lacking in the sense of moral accountability. Look at how the N.T. describes Noah’s interaction with God:

Hebrews 11:7 (GW)

Faith led Noah to listen when God warned him about the things in the future that he could not see. He obeyed God and built a ship to save his family. Through faith Noah condemned the world and received God’s approval that comes through faith.

Noah walked with God by listening, trusting, and obeying God.

Do you know Noah is one of only two patriarchs of whom it is said, “he walked with God?” Do you know who the other one was? Enoch—Noah and Enoch—Enoch escaped the flood, Noah went through it, but of both men we are told they walked with God.

**Are you walking with God? (Chosen—fish—
“nevertheless, at your word.”)**

But what else does our text say?

Genesis 6:9 (ESV)

Noah was a righteous man...

This is the first instance of the word “righteous” in the Bible, and in this context it clearly refers to Noah’s conduct and response to God’s Word. But it means even more than this as we can see in chapter 7:1

Genesis 7:1 (ESV)

¹ Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

Noah was a standout because he was a just person; he was a person who never once argued with God’s decision to bring judgment. In fact notice, from the passage we read in Hebrews, it was not Noah’s preaching which brought condemnation on the world, but rather, it was his faith. He trusted God, and his trust extended to trusting God to judge the wicked. If our faith excludes the notion that God can, does, and should judge wickedness, what kind of a faith do we have?

Now I want you to look at the middle part of our verse...

Genesis 6:9 (ESV)**Noah was...blameless in his generation.**

Rabbis and others have long debated what this phrase means. Why doesn't the text just say, "Noah was blameless?" Why does it say he was blameless in his generation? Is it suggesting to us Noah was righteous or blameless if or when compared with the wicked, corrupt, violent people of his time—that Noah was relatively righteous. In other words, don't judge poor old Noah by our standards; judge him by comparison with the corrupt creeps of his own time. As interesting as this interpretation may be, I don't agree with it. I don't believe this is what the text is saying. The Hebrew word for blameless is "tamim"—and it was used in the context of sacrifices to describe a lamb or animal without a blemish. Now either that sacrificial animal was without any blemish, or it had a blemish. There was no such thing as sort of blemished! Like Billy Crystal in the Princess Bride saying that Wesley was "mostly dead" which is different from all dead! The text says Noah was blameless in his generation generation! So what do we find in Noah's generation?

Genesis 6:11–12 (ESV)

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

Here we see a sad, sad story. Human beings, apart from God and left to themselves devolve into corruption, disorder, and violence. Shaking a fist in the face of God doesn't hurt God; it hurts those who are made in His image.

When we read the back-story, which is very brief, (Genesis 6:1-8) you are struck by a contrast. Then when you compare this with some of the genealogies, you get a better picture of what was happening in Noah's day. Genesis 6:2 "Sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful (good); and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose." The very tone of this is laced with selfish lust. Moreover, if you go back further to the end of chapter 4, you will find a brief genealogy of Cain (who murdered his own brother) with some names that are similar to or in some cases identical with names of the descendants of Seth in chapter 5. The hint is that Cain's line is ungodly and Seth's is godly; but by the time of Noah they are merging. Tucked in the genealogy of Cain is poetry from Lamech—not the

father of Noah, but another Lamech from the line of Cain, who boasts about getting murderous revenge on a man who wounded him and a boy who struck him. When you put all of this together—and you see multiplied violence that comes from self-styled ideas of justice, and you see this kind of violence married with unbridled lust in chapter 6:2—then you get the picture of Noah’s day—and to a certain extent ours as well! But you also see the contrast in Noah:

Genesis 6:8 (ESV)

⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

God’s wonderful grace! Noah trusted God, and that trust was evidenced in his obedience and it was this that gave him that wonderful description:

Blameless in his generation! What does this mean, and what does this mean for you and me? Mike Mason put it this way in his book *The Gospel According to Job*: “If someone is guiltless, it simply means that he has done nothing wrong. If he is accused of wrong, then he is accused falsely and that is all there is to it. But if someone is blameless it means something far more mysterious: it means that no matter how horrible his offenses may have been, all the charges against

him have been dropped. Absolutely no blame attaches to him because the very one he offended has exonerated him.”

This was Noah’s situation. He wasn’t good in himself; he was good because his trust was in God. And this is the trust that brings our forgiveness—because our trust is not in trust but in God.

Psalm 32:2 (NIV)

² Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them...

I believe 2021 can be better than 2020, not because any external conditions change for the better, but because God is still extending His mercy for you and for me. Will you accept it? You will have God’s approval and absolutely no condemnation.

If Noah could live this way in his generation, so can we!

