

- **What Would a Drowning Person Do?**

INTRODUCTION:

1. You may wonder why I would ask that question, but it is relevant to the subject that I want to discuss today.
2. Before I discuss that, let me set the scene that I want you to consider.
  - A. Let's say you fall into the river/lake/ocean and for whatever reason you cannot get out.
  - B. Although you can tread water, you become fatigued, and you begin to go under, and must struggle to stay afloat. This process is repeated time and again.
  - C. And, just as you are using your last bit of strength to keep your head above water, even for a few more seconds, you hear the most wonderful sound—a boat approaching.
  - D. Your opportunity for salvation is near and the life ring is ready to be tossed!
- 3. So, now I ask, "What would you, the drowning person, do?"
  - A. Do I have to even say that you would GRAB THE LIFE RING?!
  - B. But are you completely sure you would do that, because when asked in the context of evangelism a whole lot of people are not so sure?
4. With these things in mind, let us explore the question and matters related to it.

BODY:

- **I. I ask this question because the world is drowning in their sin!**
  - A. The dire condition of the sinful world.
    1. David spoke to the ominous condition of the world (Psa. 53:1-3 – "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," they are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; there is no one who does good. <sup>2</sup> God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God. <sup>3</sup> Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.").
    - a. It is amazing how much this sounds like Gen. 6:5 in the days of Noah.
    - b. Yet, we know this even has application today because the Spirit quotes it in Rom. 3:10-12 where it is used to convict Jews and Greeks/Gentiles as being **under sin**.
  - 2. But to get the bigger picture of the sinner's peril we are reminded that...
    - a. God's *wrath* will be revealed against **all sin** (Rom. 1:18 – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness** of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness").
    - b. The wrath sinners will experience from God in judgment is the **lake of fire and brimstone** (Rev. 21:8 – "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, **their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone**, which is the second death.").
    - c. This punishment will be eternal, where the fires are never quenched (Mk. 9:42-48).
- B. So, the world needs to know their dire condition!
  1. Why? Because they must *repentant* to gain forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:19 – "Therefore **repent** and return, **so that your sins may be wiped away**, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord").
  2. And repentance comes only as the product of the **gospel** and **conviction of sin**.
    - a. The gospel preached convicts us of sin (Acts 2:23, 36-38 – "this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, **you nailed to a cross** by the hands of godless men **and put Him to death**...<sup>36</sup> Therefore let all the house of Israel **know for certain** that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus **whom you crucified**.<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were **pierced to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and each of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.").
    - i. The gospel puts the blame for sin where it should be—on the one who does it!
    - ii. This is so that one's heart can be pierced, or convicted, of one's sin.
  - b. And conviction of sin produces godly sorrow which leads to repentance and salvation (2 Cor. 7:9-10 – "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made **sorrowful to the point of repentance**; for you were **made sorrowful according to the**

**will of God**, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup> For **the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance** without regret, **leading to salvation**, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”).

3. So, the world is drowning in their sins and needs to know it so that they might repent and be saved.

## • II. A drowning world and evangelism:

- A. Among brethren (and the religious world, it seems) there are basically two *opposing* schools of thought on saving the lost.
  - 1. The most popular school seeks to use carnal, fleshly, means to draw the lost to salvation.
    - a. Among brethren this began in the 1950’s when churches decided to shift their evangelistic emphasis from spiritual weapons to ones that appealed to the flesh.
    - b. It appears they concluded that people no longer react positively to learning they are *drowning in their sins*, and that the *gospel* of God’s grace is *their life ring*. So...
      - i. These churches began to help God’s evangelistic process by turning their focus to providing for people’s social and physical needs and wants!
      - ii. The reasoning was and is that if they will come for social gatherings, fun, food, and entertainment, they will like what they see and want to join resulting in the opportunity to talk with them about their *drowning condition*.
      - iii. These churches also added these new works to keep those who have been saved interested and faithful—to *keep them from jumping back into the water*, if you will.
  - 2. The second approach believes that *preaching the gospel* to the lost is the *biblical way* for the church *to draw the lost to Christ and salvation*.
    - a. These brethren resisted additions of the social/recreational/entertainment gospel.
    - b. Instead, they sought, and must continue to seek, to *put their faith in the power of preaching the gospel* to both draw and save lost souls!
  - 3. These opposing approaches, along with other issues related to the work and mission of the church, **ultimately broke their fellowship** with one another. For...
    - a. Those who favored the social/recreational/entertainment approach believe that those who reject it are *unduly restricting their work—binding where God has not bound*.
    - b. Those who reject the social/recreational/entertainment approach believe those who use it have *lost faith in the gospel* and are *adding to God’s word*.
    - c. So, due to conscience the groups could no longer support the works of the other.
- B. With these things in mind, let’s consider the opposing views in light of the *question*.
  - 1. Let’s begin by examining the *preach the gospel* approach, which is the approach of this church and the approach I believe to be biblical.
    - a. We as a congregation **reject** social programs/gatherings, recreation, and entertainment as **aids to evangelism**, as means of drawing people toward salvation (or as even being authorized works of the local church).
      - i. Why? Because Jesus said that one must be **drawn** by the Father **through hearing and learning the gospel** (Jn 6:44-45 – “**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall **all be taught of God**.’ Everyone who has **heard and learned** from the Father, **comes to Me**.”).
      - ii. If no one can be drawn to Christ except by the Father doing so **by the word**, to *what* or to *whom* are people being drawn by churches through games, food, entertainment?
      - iii. That is why we and this church must seek to save souls by preaching God’s word!
    - b. That this approach is right and cannot be wrong is supported by:
      - i. The parable of the soils (Lk. 8:5, 11 – “The sower went out to **sow his seed**;...<sup>11</sup> “Now the parable is this: the **seed** is the **word of God**.”).
      - ii. The power of the word to reach the heart, the inner man (Heb. 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”).
      - iii. The gospel is the remedy for the lost (Rom. 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God **for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew

first and also to the Greek.”).

- iv. So where is the need for, not to mention the authority for, worldly coaxing of the lost by social meals, gyms, games, food, entertainment, etc.?
- c. For, when a person realizes their dire condition before God *there is no greater draw than God's forgiveness and eternal life through Christ's blood*.
  - i. If a person learns of their dying condition and does not care, their heart is not right—it is “wayside soil.”
  - ii. A person concerned about their drowning condition will accept the life-ring and get into the boat!
- 2. Now, let's consider the *social/recreational/entertainment approach* to evangelism.
  - a. These brethren (and others) would likely claim to agree with us that one who knows he/she is drowning would grab the life ring of salvation. For, their plan is to ultimately teach them the gospel.
  - b. If true, however, their social, recreation, and entertainment programs **cannot be aids to evangelism**.
    - i. Why, because evangelism is God drawing the lost world to Him by *preaching the gospel* so that they might *hear and learn from Him* and be saved (Jn. 6:44-45)!
    - ii. To **evangelize** comes from the same word as **evangelist**, meaning both involve preaching the gospel!
    - iii. When people believe one needs *fleshly incentives* before he/she will listen to the gospel, those people are denying the very work and power of God to draw them!
  - c. This position says that God cannot effectively draw the lost to take the life ring of salvation without us first putting a cupcake or hotdog on it!
  - d. Think about it. Would a drowning person want to know if the boat has shuffleboard before he gets in? NO!

### • III. Was Noah a failure?

- A. The opposing views of Noah.
- B. If we go by the numbers, Noah would seem to be a failure.
  - 1. Churches that conclude that preaching the word alone is no longer effective—that people today want and need more—would have to come to this conclusion.
  - 2. Churches that employ recreation/social/entertainment programs draw bigger crowds and have larger churches.
    - a. To them, and this has been said to me, “The *proof* of the pudding is in the *eating*.”
    - b. So, we are seen as failures, or at least as churches losing the game, because we could be *doing so much more*.
  - 3. Of course, the issue is what God's word says, not the number of people being drawn.
- C. So, I must ask if you believe Noah was a failure?
  - 1. We know that Noah:
    - a. Was a preacher of righteousness, seeing **2 Pet. 2:5** speaks of how God “...did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, **a preacher of righteousness**, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”
    - b. Preached to people who were similar in many ways, but maybe worse in others ways, to people today (Gen. 6:1-2, 5 – “Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,<sup>2</sup> that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose...<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”).
      - i. Here are people living out their lives doing the normal things of life.
      - ii. Yet, they are doing so in godlessness and with evil hearts and intentions...*always*!
    - c. He may have preached for **120 years** (Gen. 6:3).
    - d. The results: He saved himself and seven others—8 souls...period!
  - 2. So, I ask again, was Noah a failure?
    - a. Those who seek to help the gospel with social programs, recreation, and entertain would have to answer “yes”!

- b. Why? Because Noah *failed to do all that he could*.
    - i. He failed to reach the many people who could have been drawn to enter the ark had he *used fleshly incentives*!
    - ii. Do you think people then did not like such things? Of course they did!
- D. One last scenario:
  - 1. Picture Noah living today and the world facing the same coming destruction—a global flood.
  - 2. Per biblical instruction, picture Noah's no frills, no games, no gimmicks, no social attractions ark. It is a life-saving boat for man and beast just as God's plans revealed.
  - 3. Picture a 2<sup>nd</sup> ark built by those who want to *help Noah draw people to salvation* by adding entertainment, recreation, halls for parties, etc., to their ark!
  - 4. So, which ark do you think would have more people?
    - a. Noah's *no-frills ark* designed by God for saving man and beast from the flood would likely be sparsely occupied as it was in Genesis.
    - b. The *recreational/social/entertainment ark*, however, would be full of people who, *though uninterested in Noah's message of righteousness*, were very interested in food, fun, and entertainment.
  - 5. When the flood waters come, which ark does the Bible indicate would float? (2 Cor. 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war according to the flesh**,<sup>4</sup> for the **weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh**, but **divinely powerful** for the destruction of fortresses.<sup>5</sup> We are **destroying speculations** and **every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God**, and we are **taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**”).
    - a. Which ark fits this verse?
    - b. Which approach to populating an ark reaches the heart, the mind, bringing them under obedience to Christ?

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Churches can draw the crowds by offering the world the things they want. But in the end what you are going to get is a church full of carnally minded people!
2. On the other hand, the church established and built by Christ offers the dying world the *life-ring of the loving, saving gospel of Jesus Christ*, knowing that it is the power of God to save!
3. So never lose your faith in preaching the message of Christ, and never, ever, give in to the pressures of the worldly to direct our appeal to the carnal side of man.
4. So, trust God and the gospel and preach that message to the world!
5. Of course, what must first be true in your life is that you respond to Jesus and the gospel. If you have not done that, will you come to Jesus today?