

# The Power of Raising

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

**1 Peter 3:18-22, ESV**

Noah faced an impossible generation—no amount of teaching would change their hearts. What can be done with a generation that tunes God out? Seared hearts and crust-laden consciences cannot appeal to God—they wish to hear they are “okay” as they are; no change is necessary. Many generations have lain on the brink of being like Noah's. Whether our generation has come this far is for God to judge. Just as God gave Noah a task of building a large vessel to house God's treasures, so must we build what God has placed before us. Noah carried out God's instructions just as he commanded. It boggles the mind to think of one hundred years taken up in such a task. His example leaves us a legacy of faith that highlights God's patience. God will give us the time to build what he wants us to build—we just need stick-to-itiveness.

Of all the statements Peter could have made about Noah, the most remarkable for me is “eight persons were brought safely through water”. Here, “brought safely” means to rescue completely from danger. I have always thought the ark as saving them. How did the water save Noah and his family? Sadly, it appears a whole generation had to be washed away in order to save Noah's family. The water raised the ark to safety just as Jesus raises us to safety through the power of his rising from the dead. Noah's generation was already dead—walking but dead nevertheless. While Noah's effort to raise a generation to God failed (see 2 Peter 2:5), God waited and waited until their evil required an answer of absolute finality. This is borne out in Christ giving up all, suffering for us then paying the ultimate sacrifice.

Was Noah any better than others in his generation? Clearly his generation no longer appealed to God with a clear conscience. Peter attaches this same attribute to baptism (immersion) today. The water is what saves us, or should I more accurately say who saves us? Christ saves us—not faith, not appealing in good conscience but Christ. Absolutely, Christ will not touch us without our faith, clear conscience and immersion. However, we must never confuse the means by which God saves with God's agency. God is untouchably holy. I cannot love God enough, sacrifice enough for God, or be faithful enough if God were not willing to save. Christ's sacrifice breaks through the barrier we have erected with our sins—only his sacrifice can touch the deadness in our lives and raise us to a new life.

If we fail to grasp the scope of what Peter here implies, look at the last statement in this chapter, “*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him*”. How far has Christ traveled? From the depths of *hades* to the right hand of God, Christ made the trip there and back again so that we could follow him. Do we really believe a God who does all of this will fail to work with us? We are blessed to have a God who is more patient and faithful than we are, who stands by our side when we cannot stand ourselves no longer and who erases sin so completely that he remembers them no more.

*Steve Davis*