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Noah Found Grace

704-A

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)



This lesson is about building a boat. It's about taking a ride on the strangest sea voyage in history. It will begin in a vacant lot and terminate on the top of a mountain. It will not be an uneventful voyage, and the passengers will not be a prestigious host of travelers. On board will be birds, snakes, cows and horses along with eight human beings. We are going on a ride on Noah's ark. I pray it will be a trip we will not soon forget.

In our last study, "As It Was In The Days of Noah," we took a look at Noah's world. It looked incredibly familiar. The reason it looked familiar was because God said you can take a photograph of the days of Noah and another photograph of the days of Lot and by superimposing the two one upon the other, you can get a full color portrait of the days in which we live. We looked at those illustrations and we found a world full of scoffers preoccupied with immorality and perversion. The home had decayed as the center of influence. Apostasy and heresy had attacked the church. Violence and bloodshed had become a way of life. There was contempt for authority. Society was living as thought it were "business as usual", as though no judgment was coming. But, as always, there was a remnant, a remnant who would be called to a task and granted an extra measure of grace. The saints would be delivered; then judgment would come. We learned last week that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

Having looked at Noah's world, we took a look at Noah's God. There were two great truths in Genesis 6 where God was concerned. One told us what He saw and the other told us His response, how He felt. How did God feel when He looked down at the chaos His creation had created? We read that He saw that mankind was corrupt, that all men were evil because the very imaginations of their thoughts were only evil continuously. God left us in no doubt about how He felt. Scripture says that He was grieved in His heart. The literal meaning is this: God's heart broke to the point of tears. Our God who laughs, who cries, who shouts, who experiences joy and sorrow, who experiences love and anger, experienced deep, moving grief. Being grieved wasn't the end of the matter. This is where this lesson takes up. We will continue in Genesis 6:

It repented the Lord that he made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created [Here is God's mark of ownership.]... for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Genesis 6:6)

For God to repent means He has turned around in His judgment because man has turned around in his allegiance. It does not mean that God has whimsically changed His mind or His standards. God cannot do that and remain God.

...For He [God] is not a man, that he should relent [change His mind or His standards]. (I Samuel 15:29 NKJ)

But in the same chapter, verse 11 just 18 verses before the Scripture above, God said

It repenteth me that I set up Saul to be king:

Now we know God cannot change; He is the same yesterday, today and forever. In Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Then, how does God repent? First of all, God has a preordained response to obedience. God blesses it always. He turns His face towards the obedient one.

Second, God has a pre-ordained response to sin. He turns from sin because He cannot look upon sin. He turns away from it.

Third, there is a point, either in a man's life, or in a nation's life where disobedience so tests the patience of God to its limits that God turns and becomes a God of judgment. Now when God turns toward judgment, the scripture says He repents. He turns around to a position commensurate with His response to sin. It works in reverse as well. In I Chronicles 21:15 the angel was destroying the land at God's instruction; then it says that God repented. He reached the limit of His judgment at the other end based on the repentance of the people. He turned and demonstrated mercy. God has given us many conditional promises in scripture. Even though a nation be scheduled for divine judgment, God promises that if His people which are called by His name shall humble themselves and pray, and turn, there is that word again, repent, then God says He will repent. (He will withhold judgment and heal their land.) In other words, when they turn towards Him, His pre-ordained response is that He will turn towards them. It is not a whimsical change of plans, based on emotions; it is a definitive plan of action based on a

pre-determined response to man's obedience.

So, God repented that He made man. He turned toward His nature as a divine judge. Here is the essence of this lesson, the most beautiful verse in all of this passage:

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:8)

We know three things in this passage about Noah that are found in verse 9. We are not going to discuss them at length in this lesson; we will just mention them now. Those three things are these:

- 1) Noah was a just man. We will see what that means in our next study. You may not fully know what the scripture means by a just man, but we do know that the scripture calls these people just: Noah in Genesis 6; God in Deuteronomy 32, Nehemiah 9 and Isaiah 45. Matthew 1 says that Joseph was just. Matthew 27 and Acts 22 refer to Jesus as just. John the Baptist was referred to as just in Mark 6, Simeon in Luke 2. Joseph of Arimathea in Luke 23, Cornelius in Acts 10 and Lot in II Peter 2.
- 2) Not only was Noah just, the scripture goes on to give us his second credential. He was perfect in his generation. He walked blamelessly before a wicked people. He did not become conformed to his world. It would have been very easy. Rather, he was transformed by the renewing of his mind. How did he do that?
- 3) Noah walked with God. When Noah awakened in the morning, his first words were, "Good Morning, Lord. What would You have me do today?" He was never too busy for time with God. It was not an isolated moment in which he entered his prayer chamber. The whole world was his prayer chamber. God was Noah's best friend. They talked together all day long. They walked together all day long.
- So, God repented, He reflected on the character of His judgment. He judged the world and pronounced the sentence of death. But Noah found grace. To Noah, the one man on earth who was just and perfect in his generation and walked with God, God issued divine favor. Deity revealed a miraculous plan where justice and mercy could both be satisfied. He would condemn the world, but save Noah. He would sentence all the animal kingdom to die, but save a representative of each species to begin again. Justice and mercy met at the flood. Oh, what we can learn from Noah.

Have you ever wondered how many it takes to make a majority with God? Do you ever feel alone on your job because you are the only Christian there? Do you ever feel as though you are the only Christian in your family? What does it take for God to act? One faithful man, one faithful woman. God looked down at mankind as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All were corrupt, ungodly, and in rebellion. But the precious eyes of God saw in that whirling sea of sand, one rough-cut gem. It needed polishing, but it was all He needed. God plus Noah. God plus you. We will enter into Noah's household and try to view these two chapters from the inside out.

The goal of this series, remember, is to look at the character sketches of scripture for two reasons. Our first goal is to look at the character of God and the second is to look at the character of man. In this lesson we will work our way through the story of Noah and as we do, look for three things. Jot these three things down and go back through the story on your own with these three things in mind. First of all, look for evidences of the character of God. Here are four of the character qualities that God especially reveals in this story: 1) the *righteousness* of God, 2) the *mercy* of God, 3) the *patience* of God, (when you come to the patience of God, see if you can find a New Testament reference to back that up), and 4) the *power* of God. These are qualities of God's nature that make Him God.

The second goal is to look for evidences of Noah's character. Here are five character qualities to look for as Noah's life unfolds before us.

The first is <u>availability</u>. The definition of availability is "maintaining a state of readiness to do the will of God". It is the act of remaining on call. It means that whenever God calls, you are ready.

The second quality is *courage*. Courage defined is this: "the absence of fear in the face of adversity".

The next lesson will look at his <u>obedience</u>. Obedience defined is "that life that responds to God's every word without question or delay".

The fourth quality we will look at is *faith*. Faith defined is "confidence without proof."

Finally, we will look at perseverance. Perseverance is

"continuing steadfastly until completion". It is finishing what you have started. These are the qualities we will look for in Noah.

As a by-product of looking at these qualities, we will look for some Old Testament portraits of New Testament truths. We will see if in the life story of Noah we can find a picture of salvation, baptism, the resurrection, creation, the judgment day, the carnal life versus the spiritual life, and heaven. The Old Testament is God's picture book of Jesus: the plan, the purpose and the person of Christ. Let's look for a picture of God, a picture of the real Noah and a picture of the coming Messiah.

Now, let's travel back to Noah's day. Noah had a wife, we will call her Mrs. Noah. Noah had three sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth. By the time the ark was finished, they each had a wife as well. Let's look at the whole incident through the eyes of Noah's family.

Life at Noah's house was distinctly different than every other house in the world. Mrs. Noah was aware of that. There were no R-rated movies for Noah's children. By this time in the world, however, R-rated movies were all that were shown. The city newspaper was filled with articles and pictures that portrayed perversion and immorality as natural. All of the boys' friends came from homes that had no roots in God. When they came to the Noah household for the first time, they always stood in amazement and asked the boys, "What is that over there?" "That's our family altar," Shem would answer. "That's where we sacrifice and worship God." The boys knew what to expect. They always heard chuckles, received nudges in the ribs, and comments of, "Nobody does that anymore." "We still do!" Japheth must have answered, "Our Daddy talks to God all the time." More muffled laughter no doubt would follow as the guests shuffled out the door. But the boys had become used to it by now. They expected it. The local church had closed up long ago. Only Noah remained.

One night in Noah's family life stands out above all the rest. Use your imagination, if you will. The boys came in late from football practice and Mrs. Noah was busy preparing supper. Suddenly, Daddy comes racing in through the door as white as a sheet. "Sit down, sit down, I've got something to tell you," Noah exclaims. As the family sits down to listen, Noah begins to unfold this remarkable story. "I was talking to God today,"

Noah continues, "Oh, how neat it is to talk to God." "Get to the point," the boys urge him. "Well, God to said to me, 'Noah, I am sorry that I ever made man. I am going to destroy him from the face of the earth." " Have you ever noticed how God reveals the whole of His heart to those who really walk with Him? The boys jerk forward immediately and begin to listen. Their response was much like ours as we talk about the judgment to come. "When is it going to happen?" they ask. "Don't know for sure," Noah answers, "We cannot tell the day or the hour. But, the most amazing thing happened," Noah added, as tears began to run down the old man's leathery face; and then he choked a little as he said it, "God is going to spare one family." The silence was deafening. Then he added, "It is hard to believe that family is us." The boys couldn't digest much more, so Noah added, "God has a little job for us to do before it happens. We will talk about it in the morning."

Keep picturing it in your mind. The next morning came quickly and as the family looked on with amazement, Noah unrolled a blueprint as big and as complicated as the Eden Hilton. "Boys, God told us to build an ark." The word *ark* is *tabam*; it is the same word used in Exodus 2 to describe the ark that baby Moses was placed in. It too, was to be a vessel of salvation.

"Boys, God left nothing to our imagination. His instructions are always perfect and perfectly complete. It is to be made of gopher wood because that won't rot and the worms can't eat it. It is to have many rooms in it," Noah continued. The word God used was *gen* which means many nesting or resting places. Jesus said the Father was building a place like that for us.

"He said to pitch it inside and out," Noah added. The word pitch was *kafar* and it means "to cover". It is used sixty-nine times in the Old Testament for atonement. Atonement is a covering for sins.

At this point, Shem turned to Ham and said, "Look at the size of that thing!"

"It is big, all right," Noah responded, "But it is not too big for God. It is to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high." Now let me interrupt the scene just a moment while the boys catch their breath and translate this into our terms. The ark was to be 625 feet long, 104 feet wide and 62 and 1/2 feet tall. It's capacity in tonnage was more than 600 freight cars

which would form a train 4 miles long and could carry 90 million pounds. Up to 1850 A.D. no ship in history had been built as large as Noah's ark. As late as 1932, only 1% of all the ships in the world were as big as Noah's ark.

Noah went on as he pointed at the blueprints, "This area is for the windows, to let the light in on each floor." *Each floor*. At that point, Mrs. Noah fainted. Once she was revived, Noah explained it was to be a three-story ship. Noah went on to describe the intricate array of chambers, channels and grooves and engineering specifications. Recent archeological findings confirm that the ark had a sewage system unsurpassed by any modern city. Its design was such that each floor had ample light and perfect ventilation. It was the world's first air-conditioned boat.

As the days rolled by, Noah disclosed more and more of his revelation to his family. As God confided in him, he took the time to pass on to his family all that God was revealing. Line upon line, precept upon precept, he built faith in his children by giving his family the Word of God. Noah had to explain the flood part twice because they couldn't quite grasp the magnitude of God's power. I guess the toughest day of all came when they were hammering, sawing and sweating late one afternoon. The boys were growing older by now and each one of them was engaged to be married. They and their parents had preached to the whole city again and again and again about what was going to happen, only to be laughed at, derided and threatened. Suddenly, a little light bulb went on. If no one else would believe God, why do we need such a big boat? Maybe each family gets a whole floor. But why the funny shapes?

"Dad, you had better go talk to God again, we may have read these blueprints upside down. This boat is too big," Shem might have exclaimed.

I imagine it was then that Noah broke the news. "It isn't going to be just our family," Noah said. "We are also going to take the male and female of every species of bird or animal. Boys, you are going to take a trip for a year with zebras, elephants, skunks, hippopotamuses, canaries, chickens, pigs, cows, horses, dinosaurs, lizards, sparrows, sheep, turkeys, moose, caterpillars and more." The boys asked if they could be excused.

"I can't believe it!" Ham exclaimed, "we are going to sea with

the world's first zoo."

"I hope the skunks are on the third floor," Shem added.

"I wonder why so many," Japheth chided, "I wonder."

But Noah understood. Man or beast does not evolve. Each bird, each animal reproduces only after its own kind. God told Adam that in Genesis 1. God told Noah that again.

Take two of every sort, male and female, each to reproduce after their own kind. (Genesis 6:19 paraphrase)

It had been 1,600 years since Adam, and the law of reproduction was still in force. One commentary adds this:

Here we are 6,000 years later and the sponge is still a sponge, it has not become an oyster, an octopus, a turtle, a frog, a fish or a crab. No lowly earth worm has ever turned into a spider, tarantula, scorpion, lizard, tortoise, snake or crocodile. No bug, bird or animal has ever changed from its own kind or reproduced another kind which was fertile and produced a new kind. The crossing of a donkey with a mare will produce a mule, but it cannot reproduce itself. No monkey has ever produced a man and the missing link is missing and always will be. All quite remarkable when you consider there are over two million different species of plant and animal life, each reproducing as God intended, each after its own kind.

I will never forget the day God shared with Noah in verse 21 that he was to take enough food for the whole family and all the animals for a year. Now there was only one supermarket in Noah's town. The Noah family promptly became an instant stockholder. Noah would need 32 tons of food. Here is the key to this story,

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he. (Genesis 6:22)

Do you know what that means? It means that he never used a 2' x 4' piece of lumber when God called for a 2' x 6'. It means he didn't take 1,900 if God told him to take 1,902. It means he didn't give God excuses and take off early for some relaxing and entertainment. It means he didn't settle for a bad corner with bent nails and crooked boards. It means he still found time to be with God every morning to get his instructions for that day. He always did everything God asked him to do and he did it the day God asked him to do it. He never wrote down on his list six

things God told him to do that day and then was satisfied with five, only to finish up the next day. He did everything God asked him to do *when* God asked him to do it. Timing was so important to God.

Finally, the day arrived. Noah called his family together. Now there were eight of them for the boys had all married. Noah said, "This is what God told me this morning in my quiet time.

Noah, Come thou and all of thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

For yet in seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights; (Genesis 7:1,4a)

Once again we read,

And Noah did according to all the Lord commanded him.
(Genesis 7:5)

He said, "Yes, Sir."

We read in verse 7 that Noah went in. His wife went in. All of his sons and all of his sons' wives went in. All of the animals went in two by two as God commanded. No rush. No stampede. I believe Noah was such a faithful man, such a godly man, that he simply spoke and his family responded; he simply spoke and the animals responded. He had earned their respect through godliness. Now he exercised the godly authority that respect produces. He was not like carnal Lot who, when he called to his family to come out, was greeted by contempt and laughter. God said, "Come in Noah." Noah replied, "Thus saith the Lord." His family said, "Yes." They did it by faith because as of that moment, there was not a cloud in the sky. But, as always, God kept His Word. Genesis 7:10 tells us that after seven days, it started to rain.

This was no ordinary rain storm. It fractured the radar screen. The Scripture says that "all of the foundations of the great deep were broken up." The second phrase is "the windows of heaven were opened." The word windows is the same word that is used in II Kings 7 and Ecclesiastes 12 and Isaiah 24. It means floodgates. What it means is that there was all of this pressure of water in heaven waiting to rush out, and at the prescribed moment in time, God pressed the button and the floodgates opened and it dumped itself on planet earth.

...and the Lord shut him in.

(Genesis 7:16)

The door knob was on the outside, on God's side. They had

entered by choice and obedience to God's Word, but it was God who shut the door supernaturally. Only God could let them out. No doubt it was God, too, that opened it one year and 17 days later.

...and the waters increased and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. (Genesis 7:17)

It must have been sad, looking out the window of the ark as the rain began to fall. The whole town was involved in a big party. (That is what Luke says, right up the day of the flood.) No doubt the Noah family in their silly boat were the butt of all of the humor in town. But the rain kept falling and falling and falling and falling. A sobering awe began to fall on the city. It got darker and darker and the sun seemed hidden forever. The bottles of alcohol didn't seem to do the trick. All of their silver and all of their furs were floating away. Panic stricken, they tried to swim to good old Noah's ark. But the door was shut. They had refused Noah's invitation again and again. Now they simply wept and wept as one after another clung to the tree tops. They watched each other die. Verse 21 says, all flesh died. God's judgment was complete and God's judgment was completely just.

...and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. (Genesis 7:23,24)

Chapter 8 begins this way,

And God remembered Noah...

(Genesis 8:1)

The word remembered here doesn't mean, "Oh, my goodness, I forgot about Noah." It is not like that at all. The word remembered used here is like, "I just want to remember my friend on his birthday. It is a special time and I want to make it special by giving him a remembrance." It means that God turned His face toward Noah and said, "I love you, Noah, and here is a gift to prove it." What was the gift? God made a wind to pass over the ark, and the waters receded. The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of heaven stopped. The rain from heaven was restrained by the power of God. He who can thunder and shake the heavens can speak and the storm can cease. Just like that. He can do the same thing to the storm that is in your life when the moment is right.

And the ark rested... upon the mountains of Ararat.

(Genesis 8:4)

Ararat means holy ground. Why on top of a mountain? No doubt Noah's family asked the same question. That question is being answered even in our generation. Scientists have uncovered new evidence to substantiate the word of generations past. The ark has been found packed in ice as a testimony to the reliability of God's Word. Josephus wrote about it 100 years after Christ, maybe 3,000 years after the flood, when he said, "I can still see the ark resting on the top of Ararat." In 1300 A.D. Marco Polo referred to it. In 1877 an archbishop from Persia claims to have walked through some of its rooms. Today, political pressures are keeping scientists from really working with the treasure of God's revelation, but it is there. In the miracle of God's timing, one day, the earth will marvel again at the ark of God, at the faith of Noah, and at the faithfulness of God.

Now the storm was past. Now Noah looked for God's timing to re-enter planet earth. First he sent a raven. The raven never came back. We will see why in the next lesson. Then Noah sent a dove. The dove returned for there was no place to set its feet. Noah waited 7 days, then released the dove again. This time it returned with an olive branch in its mouth. Seven days more Noah waits, and the dove goes out again. This time, it does not return. Oh, the symbolism in scripture. No accidents with God, no phrases, no words, no verses without meaning. Now, one year and 17 days after they entered the ark, Noah and his family emerge to see the earth once more. So much to do. Houses to build, food to gather, plans to make. Three million pets to care for. What do we do first? They must have asked, "Where do we start?"

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl (he had taken 7 each of those), and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; (Genesis 8:20,21a)

I have a hard time reading that last verse without weeping. Try to picture that in your mind: Here is God in heaven, the same God who was so grieved over the sinfulness of man that He repented that He had ever *made* man, now visibly moved by the fact that the first thing that faithful Noah did was worship. My friend, when God delivers you through the storm, take time to worship. It is not enough to pray when the rain is falling; it is essential to worship with thanksgiving when the sun begins to mount the heavens again and cries, "It's over, you have been

delivered." Worship the God of deliverance. So God made a new covenant with man.

And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Genesis 8:21b,22)

Until Jesus comes again, there will be sowing and harvesting, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. The God of order and the God of faithfulness gave us signs to set the clock of history by, signs to measure life by. He vowed that until Christ comes, these things shall be. That is why you will never awaken in the morning and it will cease to be day. God promised it. It is a sign of His love. Chapter 9 begins like this:

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

(Genesis 9:1)

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

And with every living creature that is with you,

(Genesis 9:9,10a)

neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. (Genesis 9:11b)

This pledge is for perpetual generations. It is an eternal, unbreakable covenant. Then God tells Noah He will give him a visible sign. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords reached down into the storehouse of heaven and He painted across the sky the most beautiful, visible demonstration of His beauty. He called it a rainbow. God told Noah: "Whenever you see a rainbow, remember My covenant."

And I will remember My covenant,

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember... (Genesis 9:15a,16)

The ark has many messages. We read in the New Testament specifically about its message concerning the resurrection. It also has a message concerning baptism. But for this lesson, we will look at one of the most important pictures etched in Scripture

by Noah and the ark. It is the picture of the Christian as he weathers the storms of life. The name Noah literally means "rest and comfort". Noah's entering into the ark is a portrait of the believer being placed in Christ and resting there. The storms of life: death, disease, heartache and pain, do not escape the Christian. They were not intended to. We are told that the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. But like the Israelites amidst the plagues, though they could not escape them, they could rest in the midst of them. Engineers tell us that the ark was not designed to sail, but to float, to rest upon the waters, going wherever the Master of the waters deemed necessary. It speaks of the spirit-controlled life. The boat had no navigational equipment so that those within could be the captain of their fate or control their destiny. That was not God's plan. Neither did it have radar so that Noah could calculate where the winds were taking him. He had to rest and live one day at a time. The ark was designed to simply rest on the water. The fact was that the God of eternity, who holds both the power of the heavens and the hand that guides men through the storms that power produces, was in perfect control.

Thus, the message of the ark speaks to our anxious, selfmade, nervous generation. We are so busy engineering our own boats in which to escape the trials of life, we lose that awesome trust that comes from realizing that God has already built the only ark that will ever see us through life's storms. Our calling is to enter the ark and rest in the arms of the Captain. We will still have problems. We will still have tests and trials. We will have frustrations. Some of you today may be swimming for your life. But listen. Listen to God carefully. Do exactly as He says. Build your life by His specifications. Teach your family everything He teaches you. Then, as the storms begin to appear on the horizon of your life (and they will), when those black, ominous clouds appear over the dry land of your experience, crawl up in the ark and rest. There is the secret so many believers never learn experientially. The storms are there for a reason. If the sky overhead was bright and blue, would we even enter the ark? Would we ever trust the Captain to guide the ship? If we could manage on our own, would we ever truly understand faith? Oh, beloved, rest on the waters today. Rest and be at peace. There will be storms, but oh, my child, the Master will see you through. And when the moment is right, the ark will carry you in His arms to dry land. With this poem, we conclude:

GOD'S ARK

Storms are raging; floods are rising; What perilous times we are in! Is there no refuge from agony? Is there no shelter from sin?

Will this tumult o'ertake us Trapped as though nobody cared? Or in His arms is there refuge Safe in the ark He's prepared?

Alas! That ark is Jesus
The one who controls the peace
The one who can speak to the storm clouds
And cause the wind's raging to cease.

Yet oft' He speaks <u>not</u> to the storm clouds To silence their clamor and power, But rather He takes us within His Ark And calls us to rest in that hour.

So do not be bitter at storms, my friend For the rainbow its message will tell God granted mercy to faithful Noah And He'll grant you mercy as well.

Rest on the waters, oh child of the King Rest, for His message is true Till the waters subside (and they always do) God will take care of you.

He'll feed you; He'll teach you; He'll love you; He'll lead you through caverns so dark And bring you back to the mountain's peak Sheltered and safe in His ark.

Rest, blessed Christian, e'en in the storm As the billows flood over your soul, Rest, blessed Christian, you're safe in the Ark And the Captain's in perfect control.

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