



It Only Takes A Few Inches

Last year we took a trip to Florida and flew. It was the first time in thirty years that I had been in an aircraft that left the ground. I enjoyed the remarkable view of the clouds and landscape below but was always aware that just a few inches away was a gap of 35,000 feet between myself and the ground. What was between the passengers aboard the plane and that void? A few inches of metal. That was all. If we stop for a moment and take a look at the various situations that we expose ourselves to everyday and ask what keeps us from being injured or killed, the answer comes back as a surprising “not much”. We can stand on a curb with traffic passing and the only reason why the cars keep on passing and we remain standing is that we do not step forward about six to twelve inches and the cars remain in their lanes, not jumping the concrete to send us to eternity. And what is the difference between life and death? About twelve inches. We see a toxic liquid in a bottle and realize that we are not dying from ingesting it, why not? The answer once again is that there is a distance of perhaps a few feet or a few inches between the substance and the organs that would be damaged by it. Survivors of various accidents and tragedies are often plagued by the thought that they lived while someone next to them did not make it. Why? The difference again is “a few inches”. There are medical and psychiatric conditions in which some folks are continually plagued by this reality and cannot get away from it. My estimation over the years has been that they are not afforded the luxury of having the same degree of blindness to some facets of reality that others do. They are continually reminded of the fragility of life and the ease with which it may be destroyed. The same thing might be said about salvation. What was the difference between Noah and the people around him who were destroyed in the flood? A few inches. How was that space created? We know that **“Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations”**. (Gen 6.9). Because of this **“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”**. (Gen 6.8). It was the grace of God that revealed to Noah that there was going to be a great flood and that he had to build the ark in order to be preserved. When the waters destroyed the world around him, the family was separated from destruction by only a few inches, the thickness of the beams and the pitch, but they were secure, protected through the providence of God. Today there are those who reject certain aspects of salvation. Baptism is not essential they believe and so do not practice it in any

form. There are others who concede that it is a “sacrament” or rite but does not involve a complete immersion. Pouring, sprinkling and smearing a little “holy water” are substitutes for doing what God has clearly commanded in his word. In the day of judgment, when those who have rejected the command of the Lord stand before him, what will be the difference between life and death, joy and torment be? Sadly, those few inches will once more prove fatal. One must ask why it is such a hard thing to imagine that such a small thing would make a difference. A bullet is very small and if thrown at someone might make a welt but not kill. Place it in a gun, aim the gun in the proper direction and pull the trigger, and someone can die. Why? Because they were in the path of the bullet. There have been a number of incidents in which some have been killed after firearms were discharged into that air. The bullets rose, fell and killed those that were in their path. How? Unfortunate souls were standing in the wrong place at the wrong time and paid the price. Christ used a very similar analogy in speaking of destruction and the need to repent. He spoke of **“...those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”** (Lk 13.4-5). The eighteen that were killed were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. A few feet one way or another and they would have been spared death and been helping to clear the rubble instead of being a casualty. They had no warning that the tower was going to fall or they would have stepped out of harms way. Without a warning they could not have known what was coming. Salvation is different. Christ and God have warned us of what is to come. We have ample time and information to make a decision about where we’ll spend eternity. Think of it this way: the Bible is a book that generally is only a few inches thick but can provide the information and direction that we need to live with God forever. The waters of baptism may only be a few feet deep but if we stay on this side of the water and refuse to obey, we will be eternally separated from God. If we cross the divide, the few inches that separate, and obey with an honest desire to please God we can avoid all that. With the right attitude and a few inches we can live in happiness forever. God said so.

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