

First Things – Genesis
Genesis 8
“Through the Flood”

1. **THERE WAS PROVIDENCE OVER THE ARK**
 - A. God was watching over Noah
 - B. God was working for Noah
2. **THERE WAS PATIENCE ON THE ARK**
 - A. The way in which Noah waited
 - B. The word for which Noah waited
3. **THERE WAS PRAISE OUTSIDE THE ARK**
 - A. The priority of this offering
 - B. The pleasure in this offering

1. Reinhold Niebuhr was a liberal theologian who served as professor of practical theology at Union Seminary during the 1960's. While his theology has been largely forgotten, one of his more memorable statements is still quoted today.

2. Niebuhr once said that the church is like Noah's ark. That is, we could not stand the stench inside if it were not for the storm outside.

3. While I appreciate the humor of that statement, I disagree with the analogy. The ark is *not* a picture of the church. As we have seen, it is a picture of the salvation that is offered to us in Jesus Christ.

4. The ark provided Noah, his family, and the animals with him, a way of escape from the judgment of God on the wholesale sin of the pre-flood world.

5. Likewise, through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we are given a way of salvation from the final wrath that is to come upon sin.

6. Looking at the ark in that way, when we come to Genesis chapter 8, we are reminded that the journey may not always be easy, but in Jesus we are promised that we will make it through the flood.

7. Like the ark, the Christian life is by no means a pleasure cruise, but *it is* a voyage through which the grace of God will carry us and keep us till we reach the heaven that Christ has prepared for us.

8. Genesis 8 is the conclusion to the story of the flood that began back in chapter 6. In this chapter we are reminded again of what it means to be *in* Christ, and to trust His grace for our salvation.

9. Notice some things we see about the ark as it comes to the end of its ride through the flood. First of all, we see here that:

I. THERE WAS PROVIDENCE OVER THE ARK

1. In the opening verse of chapter 7, it says, "*And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*"

2. As far as we know, that was the last thing Noah heard from God until the day God told him to exit the ark.

3. While God seemed to be silent during the days of the flood, he was not distant. Noah's ride on the ark was overseen by the providence of God.

4. Chapter 8 opens with the words, "*And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark...*"

5. We are reminded here that as we journey through the Christian life, we may not always be aware of what God is doing, but we can be assured that He has not left us or forsaken us.

6. Consider the providence of God over the ark. We know that:

A. God was watching over Noah

1. Again, verse one tells us that "*God remembered Noah*". The idea is not that God ever forgot Noah. The only thing God forgets about His people is their sins.

2. The reality is that God was mindful of Noah throughout the duration of the flood. He knew right where His servant was, and where He was heading.

3. Verse 4 of chapter 8 tells us that, "*...the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*"

4. I love what Matthew Henry says about that verse. Some 300 years ago, he wrote, "[The Ark] rested upon a mountain...Not by Noah's prudence (he did not steer it), but by the wise and gracious providence of God..."

5. The ark had no steering wheel; no rudder to guide it. Noah's voyage through the flood was guided and governed by the providence of God.

6. While we as God's people may at times feel like we are being tossed aimlessly on the sea of life, we can be certain that God has not forgotten us.

7. He watches over us with a providence that is greater than circumstance. He knows where we are and where we are headed.

8. God's providence over the ark is seen not only in the fact that God was watching over Noah, but we see also that:

B. God was working for Noah

1. Look again at verse one. It says, *"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged."*

2. As I said, the statement that "God remembered Noah" does not mean that He ever forgot him. Instead, when God is said to have "remembered" someone, it means that He began to act on their behalf.

3. For instance, in Genesis 30:22, we read, *"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb."*

4. In remembering Noah, God was working for Noah, and keeping the covenant He had made with Him before the flood.

5. Verse one says He sent a wind to move the flood waters. Verses 2 and 3 describe how the rain stopped, and the waters began to recede.

6. Now inside the ark, Noah could not see all that was going on around Him. He may have heard the wind, but He could not see all that God was doing on his behalf.

7. In much the same way, we may not always see the providence of God working in our lives, but we can be sure that behind the scenes, in ways we may not be able to measure, God is keeping His Word to us.

8. As William Cowper put it:

*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will'*

9. The ark rode over the flood, but over the ark *and* the flood was the providence of God. Just the same, we can trust the care and direction of Jesus over our lives.

10. Looking at this chapter, we see not only that *there was providence over the ark*, but we see also that:

II. THERE WAS PATIENCE ON THE ARK

1. From God's perspective, the flood and the journey of the ark were right on schedule. Everything happened according to God's providence.

2. However, Noah was not given a schedule. All he could do was ride through the flood, and wait for God to give him further instructions.

3. All told, Noah spent over a year, some 371 days, on the ark. Imagine being cooped-up with your family for over a year in what amounts to a giant, floating zoo.

4. One writer described it as, "...months of stable muck and bilge water, daughters-in-law and mother-in-law, and seasickness." He went on to say, "There must have been times when Noah wished they would hit an iceberg!"ⁱⁱⁱ

5. In James 1:3, Brother James tells us that, "...*the trying of your faith worketh patience.*" That is what we see in Noah's example. He was patient as God did His work.

6. As believers today, there is much we can learn from Noah's patience while on the ark. For instance, we can learn from:

A. The way in which Noah waited

1. Even after the ark came to rest on the mountain, there was still a lot of waiting for Noah to do.

2. Chapter 8 records some interesting details of what Noah did while he waited for the waters to recede. For instance, verse 6 says that Noah opened the window of the ark.

3. Then verse 7 says, "*And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.*"

4. Verse 8 says, "*Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground.*"

5. These birds acted as eyes for Noah, and served to tell him the condition of the world around him.

6. If nothing else, Noah reminds us here that waiting on God is no excuse for idleness. Though we may not know all that God is doing, we should still be seeking to discern what He's doing.
7. With that in mind, the image of the dove is interesting to me. We know that in New Testament the Holy Spirit is depicted as a dove. I believe we are reminded in this text of His ministry in the lives of believers.
8. While we are waiting for God to do His work in our lives, we have the comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit to give us guidance and help.
9. The Bible says that the Spirit communicates with God for us, even when we do not know *how* to pray, or *what* to pray.
10. If God has you in a time of waiting, don't sink into inactivity and idleness. Read your Bible, pray, seek the will of God.
11. And while you wait patiently on the Lord, let the Holy Spirit that inhabits you help you and guide you.
12. As we see Noah waiting patiently on the ark, consider not only the way in which Noah waited, but notice also:

B. The word for which Noah waited

1. Look now at verse 13. It says, *"And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry."*
2. In the first month, Noah got a look for himself at the earth around him. By all appearances, it was dry. Yet, it seems by looking at the next verse, that it was not until the next month that Noah came out of the ark.
3. Why is that? Look at verses 15 and 16. It says, *"And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee."*
4. Noah did not move until He heard from God. Though he had seen for himself that the flood was gone, he did not leave the ark until God told him to.
5. Again, Noah's example speaks to us as followers of the Lord Jesus today. We do not act on hunches and hints, fancies or feelings. We follow the Word of God alone.

6. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

7. In Isaiah 30:21, God spoke through His prophet and said, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

8. In his book, *Does God Still Guide?* J. Sidlow Baxter tells of a voyage he took from Vancouver to New Zealand. Throughout the trip, he noticed that the captain of the ship never missed a meal in the dining hall, until they came near the Fiji Islands. At that point, the captain's chair in the dining hall was empty.

9. Curious about this, Baxter asked one of the stewards where the captain was. He answered, "So far, all the way over the Pacific we have been guided by Radar; but now that we are approaching [the islands] the captain needs to be on the bridge."

10. He went on to say, "There is an underwater coral reef which now leaves only a half-mile gap through which to enter the harbor. We dare not trust to Radar here; the captain himself needs to guide from the bridge."ⁱⁱⁱ

11. The journey of life is too dangerous to trust to our own devices and decisions. We need the Captain to guide our vessels, and we don't go anywhere until He bids us to do so.

12. Looking at Genesis chapter 8, we see not only that *there was providence over the ark*, and *there was patience on the ark*, but we see also thirdly that:

III. THERE WAS PRAISE OUTSIDE THE ARK

1. Having heard from God, verse 20 says, "And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him."

2. The long journey was finally over, and a new world and a new life awaited Noah and his family.

3. Look down at verse 22. It says, "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

4. Having been carried through the flood by the grace of God, Noah paused outside the ark to offer a sacrifice unto the Lord.

5. Speaking of this offering, one old writer says, "Thereby he testified at once (a) to his gratitude to God for deliverance, (b) to his need of sacrifice in approaching His God, and (c) to the consecration of his life to the service of God..."^{iv}

6. Just as Noah sensed his need to offer a sacrifice to God, we as New Testament believers are also called to offer sacrifices to God.
7. Our sacrifices are not that of death and shed blood. Jesus has made that sacrifice for us. Our sacrifices are of a different kind. For instance, Hebrews 13:15 says, "...therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."
8. As the Lord Jesus carries through this life, like Noah, we ought to pause and offer to Him a sacrifice of praise, giving glory to His name for what He has done!
9. Consider Noah's offering outside the ark. Think about:

A. The priority of this offering

1. If I were Noah, the first thing I would have done when the door of the ark opened would be to jump out, get on my knees, and kiss the ground, mud and all.
2. When Noah stepped off the ark, his first priority was not to build a house for himself, but to build an altar to the Lord.
3. The first priority in Noah's life was to give glory to God for the salvation He had experienced. Everything else was secondary to acknowledging the goodness of God towards him.
4. We get so busy sometimes that we often forget that God saved us to bring glory to His name! He carries us through the flood, and spares us from judgment all that we might give Him praise!
5. With that being said; when is the last time you knelt at an altar somewhere and offered to God the sacrifice of praise?
6. How long has it been since you lifted your hands to heaven and thanked the Lord Jesus for the grace He has given and the goodness He's shown to you?
7. Chuck Swindoll tells of a missionary he knew who ministered among the soldiers stationed in Okinawa, Japan.
8. Swindoll knew that the man had been going through a difficult time in his life, and was facing a lot of pressure in his work.

9. He decided to go visit the missionary, but he was not at home. The man's wife mentioned the stress her husband was under, and told him that he was working late at his office in the city.

10. Swindoll took a bus into town, and made his way toward the little hut where the man worked. He said he expected to find him "folded up in despondency, discouragement, and depression."

11. As he got closer, however, he heard the man singing, "Come, Thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy praise..."

12. Looking in the window, he saw the man on his knees, his hands lifted to heaven, his Bible open on one side of him, and the hymnal on the other.^v

13. Whatever we must go through in our journey with the Lord, Noah reminds us that through it all, our first priority should be to offer to God the sacrifices of praise that He deserves!

14. Looking at this praise outside the ark, consider not only the priority of this offering, but consider also:

B. The pleasure in this offering

1. Look at verse 21. It says, "*And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; 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 thing living, as I have done.*"

2. Noah's offering was pleasing to the Lord. It moved His heart, and precipitated His grace toward the future of humanity.

3. In much the same way, God is pleased when we as His people today offer up to Him the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

4. Psalm 22:3 says, "*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" Some translations read, "...enthroned on the praises of Israel."^{vi}

5. We exalt God, and we magnify who He is when we give praise to His name. Our praises are pleasing to His ears and they honor Him.

6. Psalm 147:1 says, "*Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely (or appropriate).*"

7. Noah reminds us in this text that it is the right thing to do, and the pleasing thing to God to make it our priority to praise and thank Him for who He is and what He has done.

8. I've been in the little bedroom in London, England where John Wesley died. He was 88 years old, but despite his weakened condition, the little preacher opened his mouth and began to sing the hymn, "I'll praise my Maker While I Have Breath".

9. While we have breath, let us offer to Him who brings us through the flood, the praise and thanksgiving He is due.

1. I think it is safe to say the ark was Noah's first and only boat ride.

2. By the time he had been carried through the flood, I suppose he was a committed "land-lover" for the rest of his days.

3. While the ark was not an easy time for Noah, it was an essential time. Through the flood, Noah learned to wait on the Lord, and to trust in His providence and care.

4. Being a Christian may not always be easy, but walking with Christ in this world teaches us that He is a Savior to be trusted, and instills in us a heartfelt gratitude for His grace and mercy.

5. May we learn from God's servant Noah, and may we trust in Christ as the ark of our salvation! Because of what He did for us on the cross, we can be sure that we will make it through the flood.

ⁱ Cowper, William, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way", 1774

ⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 143

ⁱⁱⁱ Baxter, J. Sidlow, Does God Still Guide?, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1971), p. 20-21

^{iv} Thomas, W.A. Griffith, Genesis I-XXV, (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1907), p. 101

^v Swindoll, Charles, The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart, (Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998), p. 628

^{vi} *ESV, HCSB*