

God's Great Promise After the Flood

Turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis, *The Book of Beginnings*, and the chapter 8:20-22.

Noah was now gone out into a desolate world, where, one might have thought, his first care would have been to build a house for himself, but he begins with an altar for God. The first thing done in the new world was an act of worship. Noah sacrificed to the Lord, and God was well pleased with what Noah had done. But the burning flesh could no more please God, than the blood of bulls and goats.

The devastating flood washed away the race of wicked men, but it did not remove sin from man's nature, who being conceived and born in sin, thinks, devises, and loves wickedness, even from his youth, and that as much since the flood as before. But God graciously declared in verse 21 he never would drown the world again.

Matthew Henry writes, “While the earth remains, and man upon it, there shall be summer and winter. It is plain that this earth is not to remain always. It, and all the works in it, must shortly be burned up; and we look for new heavens and a new earth, when all these things shall be dissolved. But as long as it does remain, God's providence will cause the course of times and seasons to go on, and makes each to know its place. And on this word we depend, that thus it shall be. We see God's promises to the creatures made good, and may infer that his promises to all believers shall be so.”

This morning I would like to think particularly of the Lord who is the rich and bountiful Giver. The One who gives us all things richly to enjoy.

We read in James 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Despite our sins. Despite our rebellion. The Lord continues to be Jehovah Jirah, *The Lord Our Provider*. What grace and mercy to show sinners. As a nation this morning we deserve nothing but God's judgment and wrath for our sins. But God, in his great mercy, has continued to give us blessings from heaven: food, clothes, shelter, jobs, and life etc.

Yes. God is indeed the Great Giver. And what better way to celebrate the winter season than to consider the wonderful promises of God.

The amazing thing about the promises of God is that they can never fail. There is no possibility that even one of them will ever let us down. Their fulfillment is absolutely guaranteed because they are base upon the unchanging character of God. The One who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. The Lord can't lie. He is not like us. We make a promise and then break it. God is the exact opposite.

We read in Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 1:20 “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

Peter adds in 2 Peter 1:4 “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

The mother of all promises is found in Hebrews 13:5-6, “...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Now this promise of Genesis chapter 8 is one of the earliest promises God has made. And it is a promise that is universal in its scope. It’s a promise that is being fulfilled continuously and annually in the life of every nation upon the earth. This is not a private promise that God personally made to Noah and to his little family at this time. This is a promise that has universal ramifications and implications. It’s a promise to you and to me this morning and to all mankind.

And it is a promise that is unconditional. There are no conditions attached. This promise does not depend upon anything that we do or don't do but is entirely based upon God's sovereign and free grace. God says, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake. Neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remained, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." This is reinforced in Hebrew with three negatives, "Never again, Never again, Never again." The title of my message is, **God's Great Promise After the Flood.**

As we look at this remarkable, ancient promise here in Genesis 8 we need to consider 3 things. First the CONTENT of the promise. Secondly, the SUCCESSORS of the promise. Thirdly, and perhaps the most important point of all the PURPOSE for the promise.

THE CONTENT OF THE PROMISE

You'll notice that the promise is divided into 2 parts. The first part is brought out in verse 21. "and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." Now in the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis we discover that the earth has come under a twofold curse as a result of human sin and wickedness.

The first of these curses is mentioned in Genesis 3:17 where we read that because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God pronounced a curse upon the ground. Read the verse.

Genesis 3:17, "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;"

And that curse has resulted not in an under productive earth but in over production. This earth now produces things that it never intended to produce. It brings forth things like, thorns, thistles, briars, and weeds. So that in the sweat of man's face, he shall eat his bread until he returns to the dust.

The whole earth has come under a curse because of sin. This is the reason why we hear about these great natural disasters that take place today in the earth like earthquakes and storms, volcanic eruptions. This creation is out of joint. It's a result of God's curse upon the ground.

And now the second curse was the flood itself. As God looked down from heaven he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and the intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

So God poured forth that judgmental flood that destroyed the whole of humanity with the exception of 8 individuals. This planet literally perished. Every living thing came to an end and the living earth was reduced to a watery grave.

What does God mean when He says I will never again curse the ground for mans sake? First curse we still see the thorns, thistles, and weeds that overtake our gardens. Life for the farmer is never easy. So unpredictable. Think of the many crops that have been destroyed because of local flooding. All these things are the result of God's original curse upon the land. So the promise that God made in Genesis 8 does not apply to the removal of the original curse of that time.

What it does mean is that God will never again destroy this earth with a universal flood. End of verse 21, "neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."

It is repeated later in Genesis 9:11, "And I will establish my covenant with you, 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."

What encouragement this must have been to Noah and his family. They had only just left the ark. The place of security, safety, and salvation. For the first time in many weeks they were on dry land. And they must have wondered whether the same thing would ever happened again.

After all, nothing had really changed fundamentally. The human race was wilted down to 8 individuals but there was still sin in the human heart of these people. These 8 were still sinners in the sight of God. Sinners from birth with the same tendencies to evil that led to the wickedness of the old world was still in them.

Wouldn't it inevitably follow that this wickedness will arise again to the surface. That humanity be brought back to the same old depravity and a fresh judgment would come pouring forth on the earth. But the Lord reassures Noah and his family with this amazing promise, "I will never destroy the earth with the flood again." The Lord committed to the preservation of human life on this planet.

Dr. Alan Cairns observed, "judgment is never God's final solution." Such is the mercy and compassion of our God.

Furthermore, the second part of the promise is found in verse 22 "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

The reason for the additional part of this promise was because the flood had such a devastating impact on the whole realm of nature that creation was thrown into utter chaos and confusion. The cycle of nature literally came to an end. The flood was such a catastrophic event.

The Lord says in verse 22 that he is going to restore the seasons to their appointed order. Behind nature's laws we have nature's Lord. The One who is ruling and upholding the universe by His power. It is right therefore, that we thank God for the bountiful harvest we partake in and the beautiful seasons we enjoy each year.

SUCCESSORS OF THE PROMISE

Another way to see the greatness and wonder of this amazing promise is to consider the character of the people to whom the promise was given. Read verse 21. The Lord knows all about us and He knew that same wickedness would break out again and again. And yet God, in the light of that, God made this incredible promise.

When a jeweler shows a prospective buyer a diamond, they use a black cloth as a background to show forth the brilliance, beauty, and fire of the diamond. Similarly, in the backdrop of man's sinful darkness, God showcases His grace and mercy.

The recipients of this promise were sinners. We are first and foremost sinners by nature. We have original sin: that is sin passed down to us by our first parents Adam and Eve. Sin has effected every part of our lives and every faculty of our being. Sin effects our minds so that we no longer think God's thoughts. Sin effects our wills so that we always want to go our own selfish way. Sin effects our hearts so we love what God hates and hate what God loves.

Therefore, sin has resulted in the total corruption and pollution of our being. And God tells us that this is true of everyone of us and it is true from our youth. That baby who looks so sweet and innocent is not a little angel. The Bible declares that baby is a little sinner. You see when the baby grows up rebellion surfaces and constant correction and restraint is needed. Who taught the baby this? The Bible tells us the answer, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Donald Grey Barnhouse was a Presbyterian minister who lived during the 20th century. He told a story of one of his children who displayed its sinful nature before it could talk. They were living in France at the time and had a French Nanny who taught motions to the baby about a little French song. The song was about Marionette. As the song was sung the child's hands were made to go around in a circle to imitate the dancing, and they were placed behind the back to show how the dancers went back stage at the end of the act. Now the child was not allowed to suck her thumb and her parents usually smacked the baby's hand lightly to get her to stop.

One day Dr. Barnhouse came into the nursery and there was no doubt as to what the baby was doing. There was the mouth. There was the thumb, and a long string of saliva in between. As soon as the daughter saw him, he made her little hands go through the motions of the marionette song, as if to say, "No dear father, you are mistaken. It may look as if I was sucking my thumb, but actually I was doing the little song that seemed to please you so much.

David is clear in Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

And if that was not clear enough, David writes in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Jeremiah adds in Jeremiah 3:25, “We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

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THE PURPOSE FOR THE PROMISE

So what is the reason for the promise? The answer is in verse 20 (Read the verse). The whole thing hinges on Noah’s sacrifice. This is the hinge on which everything turns and changes. The boat builder now builds an altar.

And as he offers up the burnt offering on the altar, in gratitude for what God has done for him and his family, and his acknowledgement of their sinfulness, God smells the soothing aroma.

The Lord has revealed to mankind from the earliest times that there is only one way that sinners can be accepted by God. One way that sins can be forgiven and wrath turned away. And that is the way of sacrifice. Blood must be shed. Innocent life must be laid down in substitution sacrifice. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.”

Adam, Cain, and Abel, offered sacrifices, and there can be no doubt that they had altars on which they offered them; but this, builded by Noah, is certainly the first on record. Without sacrifice there never was, there never can be, any true religion.

All of the animal sacrifices in the O.T. could not really atone for human sin. The only validity in the animal sacrifices remained in the fact that these were pictures that pointed to that One, Perfect, Offering for sin.

Matthew Henry writes, “Herein God had an eye, not so much to Noah's sacrifice as to Christ's sacrifice of himself, which was typified and represented by it, and which was indeed an offering of a sweet-smelling savour.”

We read in Ephesians 5:2, “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”

In closing, We have an altar and that is Christ. The sacrifice of God’s dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross, satisfies divine wrath and justice. Christ only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in. Let us be thankful and rejoice in the great promise of God this day.