

Grace Through the Storm to the Other Side (Genesis 8)

I preached a message with this text and title 3 years ago that wasn't recorded in God's providence, and that only 20 or less of you were there for, and the few of you who were probably won't remember much of it (much less something you heard taught more recently). I want you to turn again to the story of the perfect storm, the flood in Genesis 8, and I trust in God's providence His truth is timely again

Start in 7:11: *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.*¹² *The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights ...*¹⁷ *Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.*¹⁸ *The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.*¹⁹ *The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered ...*²⁴ *The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.*

That is a long time to be in-doors in a storm, with animals, in-laws, in the dark, a floating prison pummeled by waves, maybe tsunamis (if earthquakes cause them, all the deep fountains bursting open in v. 11 would certainly have made for a rough ride, even with an ark perfectly designed by God to withstand His perfect storm). It was more months before Noah and his family finally came out of the dark and saw the daylight when they opened the window. It was a tropical disturbance in West Africa that caused Hurricane Isaac travel across the Atlantic to the US East Coast recently and we can be sure there were the greatest disturbances ever in that greatest storm ever in Gen 7-8 that would have disturbed Noah riding it out

The rain was worse than Hurricane Katrina dumped in 2005 on the same date as Isaac, and we can remember those flood pictures. On the exact same date last year, during a lesser hurricane warning, I flew on a turbulent flight in the East Coast en route to Africa, in a dark time of my life, travelling to bury my son Mark Joseph whose death I had discovered just 4 days earlier. Dark and stormy times of life, literally or figuratively or spiritually, can shake us up and it is important in those times that we remember God remembers us and His grace is with us in the darkness and storm to the other side

Genesis 8:1 says "*But God remembered Noah ...*"

I remember when I first preached on this chapter. That Sunday evening in God's providence, we had been in ER the night before from dinner-time until a few hours before the Sunday service that morning. My wife that Saturday had some memory loss, loss of hearing, slurred speech, vision impairment and seeing auras or prisms of light, numbness that had worked through her body, and her arm was moving up spontaneously without her doing it, and it was a pretty scary time, as they ran various tests on her blood and brain. It was later diagnosed as a migraine and no lasting effects.

My mind had been meditating on the truths of Genesis 8 already that week, and my heart and prayers in those uncertain (and honestly fearful) hours also kept going back to what the Lord had me meditating on the week before that, the words of Psalm 46:

¹ God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake ...

Those things literally were happening in Gen. 8. And God's Word and grace that sustained them and the psalmist was there for us, too Psalm 46:10 says *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*

We need to remember the Lord of hosts is with us in the storm, our refuge in any storm or trouble as we stop and know that He is God. God's providence and timing and grace were manifested on that weekend in more ways than I can share, but it was just 24 hours earlier when Tony Sanelli had been sharing his testimony of God's providence and grace and sovereign goodness (Romans 8:28) and the words he shared from Cowper's hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" also were in my mind many times in the ER, with great encouragement to my soul that night in His providence.

‘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.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy and shall break In blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace;
 Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face ...’¹

In Genesis 8, God shook things up for 40 nights and days, as their wooden ship was battered by the storm in the sea, like Psalm 46 says; earth removed from sight, mountains all under the sea, waters roaring and troubled. *But God remembered Noah* (v. 1). Grace was there in the most extreme and uncertain time ever on this planet, God's grace was in the storm, through the storm to the other side. It couldn't have possibly been more dark and stormy ... *But God.*

Those first 2 words in Genesis 8:1 reappear later in this same book. Joseph says in Genesis 50:20 to his brothers who had thrown him in a dark pit, sold him as a slave where he was in a dark prison for many more years, he says to his brothers: "*you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...*" and then he comforted them in v. 24: "*I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you ...*"

Acts 7:9 says they "*sold him into Egypt. But God was with him*"

Ps 73:26 "*My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*"

Acts 2 says of the darkest day of history, the darkness of Calvary when Jesus was "*nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again ...*" (v. 23-24)

What about the darkness of our sin, while we were still helpless. It says in Romans 5:8 "***But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***"

Ephesians 2:1-3 may be the darkest blackest picture of sinful man in Scripture, and v. 3 ends saying we all "*were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*"⁴ ***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,***⁵ *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ*"

Praise God for His gracious glorious "but God" Bible verses!

- The world was dark with judgment and all other breathing land life wiped out, ark kept alive only by God's promise
- They're all alone on an endless ocean with no land in sight or on the planet, in a dark smelly floating zoo with in-laws
- And the longer they were there, aware of God's judgment and how seriously He takes sin that He would do this to the planet, and aware of their own sinfulness, as they would be day by day...we see here not only wrath, *but God* in grace

The next word is also rich in v. 1: *But God remembered Noah ...*

When it says “God remembered” them, God is omniscient and never has amnesia, so the idea is not that God can forget in the way humans can. But the biblical word “remember” goes deeper. The word “remember” when used of God often refers to Him being mindful or merciful, or looking upon with favor, remembering to do good, to take action, to grant requests, to deliver, to care for.

Vine's: “remember” is used of God in respect to His covenant promises and is followed by an action to fulfill His covenant. God delivered Lot from Sodom because of His covenant with Abraham ... “God remembered Abraham, and brought Lot out of the catastrophe ...” (Gen. 19:29, NIV) ... The new covenant promise is: “... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34) ... “... Remember, break not thy covenant with us” (Jer. 14:21).’ ... the psalmist: “Remember not the sins of my youth ... according to thy mercy remember thou me ...” (Ps. 25:7)’

The criminal on the cross next to Jesus recognized Him as the Lord and said “*Remember me* when you enter your kingdom.” He didn’t mean just “recall me mentally” – he meant “be merciful to me.” That’s the idea in Gen 8:1; God remembered mercifully, directing his attention and care and toward Noah and all with him. The end of v. 1 says He caused a wind to pass over the earth and the water.

The terms in verse 1 for earth and water and wind passing over it are all terms from Genesis 1:1-2 ... where the *ruach* (spirit / wind) of God is moving over the original watery planet with no land. God who was personally involved in the original watery world is also personally involved here in His grace. And just as He made dry land to appear in Genesis 1:9, He is going to do it again. God in His justice could’ve brought the world to an end, *but God* in His grace is about to give this new family a new start in a new world.

The original readers of these writings of Moses who were about to enter their new land, they would have remembered another time the book of Moses says “God remembered.” It was in their parent’s lifetime, not in the captivity of an ark, but in the captivity of Egypt:

Exodus 2:24-25 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant ... and God took notice of them.

Exodus 2 is also the only other place in the whole Hebrew Bible that has this word “ark” - what baby Moses floated in on the Nile.

The OT Jews would certainly be familiar with that passage of the man through whom God would rescue His people again, Moses. Listen to the parallel language from the red sea Exodus, the other time God saves His people *through the waters*. Listen to the terms of God judging the Egyptians who were opposing God's people:

Ex. 14:21 "... and the *LORD* swept the sea back by a strong east wind [same Heb. word in Gen. 8:1] all night and turned the sea into dry land [also same Heb. term in Gen. 8, v. 13-14] so that the waters [also in Gen. 8] were divided." ...²⁸ **The waters returned** [same phrase as Gen 8:3] and **covered** [also Heb. term from flood, ex: Gen. 7:19-20] the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; **not even one of them remained** [also very similar language to God's destruction on all others in Gen. 7].²⁹ But the sons of Israel walked on dry land ... [God will allow His people to soon walk on it here]

It's hard to conclude all these parallels were merely coincidences for the original readers of Genesis and Exodus that Moses wrote. Those who came out from Egypt with him would remember being protected from the ocean and grace that brought them and their family and animals to the other side while all others drowned in judgment (their parents were to tell them the stories). And here they read of their ancestors also kept dry and protected by the walls of the ark holding back the sea around them and preserving them and their animals while all others die and are drowned in judgment.

Point: the God with Noah was with the Israelites in Moses' day and the God who remembered Noah remembers His people today.

Sailhammer says the writer 'who frequently seizes on wordplays ... would not have been unaware of the parallels suggested by his narratives. We must reckon with the fact that the author is deliberately recounting these various events in such a way to highlight their similarity. **God's dealings in the past prefigure his work in the present and the future.**'²

The Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever. His grace was with me a year ago through the storm to the other side of the sea. I didn't know why God had allowed my son to die, but I knew God and His character, and I knew that God allowed His own son to die because of His great love for me, for reasons I can't fully fathom. I didn't have to ask "where was God when my son died," because I knew He was the same place He was when His Son died.

He's on His throne ruling all things, not just with control but with compassion, reigning with both sovereignty and goodness. And it's the same throne where His same Son stands ready to come to the aid of those in need of mercy as Jesus is one who sympathizes with weakness He shared with us, to share grace with us (Heb 4:14-16).

As I walked through the valley of death, my Shepherd "*was with me. His rod and His staff, they comforted me ... His goodness and mercy followed me,*" and I trust theologically He also carried Mark Joseph to dwell in His house forever. I know God's goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. I wrote I felt it was as if Jesus was actually standing next to me, arm around me. He was.

His grace was with me in that darkness through to the other side. I shared with you this morning that this past week last year, after the funeral for our first adopted son, God placed in my empty hands on September 6th 2011 an equally precious boy who He had planned for us to adopt, who you know as Matteus. God's smiling face was big with mercy behind the cloud I so much dreaded on that trip.

On this very day last year, I said to him in Swahili with Didier's help "*meta kuya ten, ah*" (the words of John 14:18 "I will not leave as orphan...I will come to you"). I climbed on an airplane and by the grace of my heavenly Father who came to me and didn't leave me an orphan but adopted me into His family, He allowed us to do the same with Matteus in a miraculous matter of weeks, S.D.G.

Back in Genesis, God was also with Noah and the ark through dark and stormy nights, which finally come to an end by God's grace which was and always is there through the storm to the other side.

² *Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; ³ and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. ⁴ In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested on the mountains ...*

The word "rest" is actually the same root word that's translated "Noah," so there's a play on his name and his father's hope in him. Genesis 5:28 *Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. ²⁹ Now he called his name **Noah**, saying, "This one will give us **rest** from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed."*

Noah was a type, but not the ultimate fulfillment. This prefigures or pictures God's grace as became clearer in later revelation. A.W. Pink explains that Noah's 'father regarded him as the one who should be the rest-giver, and as one who should provide comfort from the toil incurred by the Curse. ... Lamech looked upon his son as one who should bring deliverance from the Curse, as one who should provide comfort and rest from the weariness of toil. Our readers will readily see how this ... receives its fulfillment in the One of whom it was also written, "And His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. 11:10), and who when on earth said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). [The ultimate fulfillment of Lamech's words was not in Noah but] looks forward to the time of our Lord's Second Advent when He shall deliver the earth from its Curse.'³

Augustine said our hearts are restless till they find rest in God. The word "rest" in v. 4 means 'to settle down or come to a stop.' We need to stop striving, rest in Jesus, be still and know He is God

Rest in the sovereignty of the God who made the ark to rest safely, keeping it safe in the greatest darkest storm in human history, and bringing it safely to exactly the best place to disembark the ark. God's grace is there through the storm to the other side. In the darkest ark, God's presence and providence and care is still there. Noah and family could experience rest in the truth we sing: "Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

⁵ *The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.* ⁶ *Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;* ⁷ *and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.* ⁸ *Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land;* ⁹ *but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth.* *Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.* ¹⁰ *So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.* ¹¹ *The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf.* So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. ¹² *Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.*

There is great care taken in the text (chiasm) to show great care of the God whose great grace was there through the storm to the other side, reversing every detail of the flood narrative of Genesis 7. God is a God of details and His providence governs all the details, and there is no devastation and destruction His grace cannot undo and make new. Praise God He is a God of such detail and detailed care.

¹³ Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

Some have called the period between OT & NT “the silent years.” That’s because God was not speaking audibly or through prophets as He did while the OT was being written. The time on the ark could be called ‘the silent year.’ No word from God for *over a year* and at this point there’s still no supernatural sign or audible voice. Noah has to apply natural means and wisdom using the mind and the resources God has given him rather than getting a “word from God” (God usually works without voices). He could not see, so he had to live by faith, before, after, and during this whole flood story. Maybe their prayers at time seemed to hit the gopher-wood ceiling of the ark, and at times they probably felt abandoned, wondering whether God had forgotten them, if the storm would ever end ...

James Boice says Noah ‘would have felt himself to be abandoned by his heavenly father much more keenly than I (or anyone else) ever felt abandoned by an earthly father.

Are you in that state ...? Do you feel abandoned? Does God seem to have forgotten you? If that is the case, the eighth chapter of Genesis is for you particularly, for its theme is that God has not forgotten. God remembers ... When we look at this from Noah’s point of view, this is wonderful. Although Noah felt himself to be abandoned by God and was abandoned so far as any direct intervention of God or a word from him during the flood year was concerned, those days were now overcome. God acted again! God spoke again! And Noah’s depression must have fled away like storm clouds after the sun had begun to shine.

That is the point at which this story communicates hope – if you think yourself to be abandoned by God. The hope is not in abstract reasoning to the effect that God is aware of all things and is therefore aware of you. That is true, but it is not always helpful.

The hope is in knowing that although God has not acted in your life for what is perhaps a long time, nevertheless he will act again. And in the meantime, your job is to go in faithful obedience to what he has already shown you – however long ago that was.⁴

The God who spoke light into darkness in Gen. 1:5 speaks again
¹⁵ *Then God spoke to Noah, saying,* ¹⁶ “*Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.*” ¹⁷ “*Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.*” ¹⁸ *So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.* ¹⁹ *Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.* ²⁰ *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.* ²¹ *The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.*” ²² “*While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.*”

Man's heart is still sinful (v. 21b “evil from his youth”) but praise God for His covenant grace and faithfulness through the storm. This language of God's shows His mercy and love to creation and His creatures, especially coming on the heels of such wrath:

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest
 Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
 Join with all nature in manifold witness
 To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love

One last note of grace: why the attention to details of dates, month, etc. (ex: v. 4)? Well, one clear implication is to underscore that every detail of this is a real historical narrative so we can trust the grace of God today. It also helps us date the flood with genealogies that follow to less than 5,000 years ago, which fits scientifically with creationist research. But for the original and later Jewish readers there may be something more noteworthy about this date.

Some have argued that even these details may be a reference to God's grace that might have been understood somewhat by the original readers (Israel from the pen of Moses) and more fully by NT readers later. When OT Jews read this part of their Torah about the seventh month they knew that this month was very important because on it Leviticus 23:23ff instructed them to celebrate Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement – interestingly *kippur* is a form of the word for the “covering” they put on the ark). That passage also says that in the same seventh month, they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Trumpets, so the seventh month was a big one. What about the day of month?

Warren Wiersbe writes: ‘Beginning with the Exodus, the Jews had both civil and religious calendars. The civil year began in the seventh month (Tishri), our mid-September to mid-October; but the religious year started with Passover, the fourteenth day of Nisan (Ex. 12:2), our mid-March to mid-April. However, Nisan would be the seventh month of the *civil* year, and the seventeenth day of the seventh month would be three days after Passover, *the day of our Lord’s resurrection ... [so on the Jewish civil calendar]* the ark rested in Ararat on the date our Lord arose from the dead.’⁵

You can read more about the Jewish calendar change for Passover in the MSB note on Exodus 12:2. The OT readers wouldn’t have seen this but it certainly is interesting that the completion of the ark’s deliverance (in saving those in it) also occurred on the same day that Christ completed His deliverance to save all in Christ.

1 Peter 3:18–22 (NKJV) *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God ... once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*²¹ *There is also an antitype which now saves us—... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...*

Paul Taylor writes: ‘Thus Jesus rose from the dead on the 17th day of the seventh month, according to the civil calendar. Remarkably, this is the same day as the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat’⁶

Hebrews 11:7 (NKJV) *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

So it's no stretch of interpretation to say that Noah and the ark is a picture of salvation and saving faith, because God's Word says so. It's not a stretch to see things concerning Christ here, because in Luke 24:27 "***beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures***" (Genesis 8 is definitely part of "all the Scriptures").

Let's praise the Lord Jesus His grace is with us through the storm to the other side, and that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that we can rest in Him, be still, and know He is God.

¹ William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

² EBC, 89.

³ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis*, chapter 12, "Noah a Type of Christ."

⁴ Boice, *Genesis*, 1:369.

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1998). *Be basic*. An Old Testament study. (106). Colorado Springs, Colo.: Chariot Victor Pub.

⁶ Paul Taylor, *The Six Days of Genesis*, Master Books, p. 166-67.