

The God of the Flood

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[0:00] Would you turn with me in your Bibles, please, back to the passage we've read in Genesis chapter 6. Genesis 6. In the face of all of the wickedness of the world, we read in verse 8,!

Noah found favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, as we come for a short time this morning to your word in the Bible, we ask and pray for your guidance and your direction to lead us into the truth. We need, Lord, your blessing continually. We dare not come to the word of the Bible by ourselves without your leading and direction, without your help. And so we ask today that you would indeed open these things for us, so that we would see the truth, that we would know the truth, that we would believe the truth and hold to it and experience the preciousness of it. We ask then these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So often when we come to stories in the Bible, we often put ourselves or humans at the heart of the story. So the flood is a good example of this. You know, when we think about the story of the flood or the ark, what do we think of?

[1:43] Well, so often it's Noah's ark, isn't it? It's the flood of Noah. As if somehow Noah is who the story is about.

As if Noah is the one who's at the center of this account. But that's just not the case. The reality is that all of these stories, the whole of the Bible, is given to us not to tell us about Noah or to tell us about any of the characters in the story. But it's there to tell us about the God who is over it all. The God who is working and acting in all of it. It's not a story about the man who was saved so much as it's a story about God who does the saving.

And so this morning I want us to think about this salvation. And I want us to think about the God of this salvation in Noah's experience. The salvation itself, we should be absolutely clear, it is gargantuan.

We cannot begin to underestimate the scale of what's happened in Noah's experience. Noah is facing, if you're a fan of the movies, maybe the phrase an extinction level event kind of rings home with you.

[3:12] It's one of these moments in human history where everything is on the line. There is about to be complete destruction. And Noah, I think, knows it.

When God comes to him and says, I'm going to destroy everything and I'm going to start over, Noah's fear must have been palpable. It's the worst of all possible times. It is a moment of extreme devastation. Everything that Noah knows, everyone Noah knows except his immediate family, is about to be blotted out of existence, washed away in the scale of this flood. And I'm sure today, all of us can probably go to moments in our lives where that has been almost the case. Where our life has felt like that. Where moments of absolute calamity and catastrophe are before us. Where it feels as if everything we know, even the ground under our feet, is being taken away.

[4:26] Maybe you're there right now. Maybe that's the way experience feels at this moment. And the question for us today is really the same as the experience of Noah in this flood.

Where is God in all of this? Who is God? And how does God reveal himself in this? The first of the things that we can note is that God chooses Noah.

That's one of the first things, actually, that happens in this account. God is set on judgment and destruction. And in the middle of all of this, God chooses to save Noah.

And we could ask ourselves, why? Maybe it's because we think, well, Noah was the only good man around. And certainly that's what the narrative tells us. Noah was a good man.

Noah was someone who feared the Lord. He walked with God. His character was shaped by that experience of fellowship with God.

[5:47] So we could say Noah, in that sense, was perhaps a good man. And that might lead us to say, well, God, therefore, saves good people.

We might think to ourselves that God chose to save Noah because he was such a good person. And maybe as you look around the church today, you might see Christians around you.

Some of whom, not necessarily all of whom, but some of whom are good people. They might be exemplary people. And you might think to yourself, well, that's what God does when he saves people.

When the salvation of God comes into someone's experience, you might think, well, God saves good people. But that cannot possibly be the case.

Because the Bible is full of stories of bad people who get saved. There are plenty bad sinners who discover the salvation and the grace of God.

[6:55] And that was the case in Noah's life, too. Because the verse that we tend to think says, well, God looked at Noah and saw a good guy and liked him and thought he'd save him.

Is that verse, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And the way we read that is we tend to think, well, Noah was somebody that God chose to bless because he saw something in him.

But that's not what the verse means. The word that's translated favor there is the word for grace. It's very close to the same idea we were thinking about actually last time I was preaching.

When we were thinking about God out of his good pleasure, revealing things to us in salvation.

What it's saying there is God took pleasure in saving Noah.

In showing grace to Noah. God delighted in doing this. God was pleased to do this thing. It wasn't because Noah was offering sacrifices.

[8:02] It wasn't because Noah was, in any respect, an outstanding person. The initiative begins with God himself showing undeserved favor to a human.

Noah, who, although he is perhaps better than many, is still himself a sinner. Is still himself someone who needs God's grace.

Not deserves it. Not because he's earned it. But because he needs it. And God has chosen to show it.

And Noah is someone who, in the face of this, has already experienced it in his life.

Because long before the flood ever happened, Noah had been walking with God already. Noah had a relationship with God. A relationship of trust. A relationship of faith.

[9:06] The Bible tells us elsewhere that without faith it is impossible to please God. So Noah must have heard things of God passed down from his parents and grandparents and great-grandparents.

A story that came to him of God being a God who saves people. That goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. And Noah was in a line of people who were believing God was a God who saves. And so when the story and the time and the news of the flood comes. When the news of ultimate judgment arrives. Noah is saved because he has trusted God already. He's already had faith in a God who offers salvation.

And today that's what each and every one of us desperately need. We need to come to know and trust a God who offers salvation.

I wonder, is that today the God you've come to meet and to worship in our service today? Is that why you're here? Are you here because you want to meet and love and know and hear of and long to know better?

[10:26] A God who brings salvation. Undeserved salvation. To men and women in the darkest of experiences.

God chose Noah. Secondly, God taught Noah. See, I think sometimes we tend to have this idea that maybe God doesn't help us out enough.

And some people I think maybe today think that way. They think, well, I know God is a righteous God. And I know God is going to send judgment on the earth. And I know that maybe even I will experience that judgment.

I'm in danger of the judgment of God. But I just don't know what to do. I just don't know how to resolve this. I don't know what's needed. I don't know what's necessary.

And what we need to remember is that the story of the flood is a story not of Noah working out what needs to be done to avert disaster. I mean, God doesn't leave Noah in that uncertain position where he can just figure out what to do.

[11:37] God says to Noah, you need to build an ark. And for Noah, that must have been really strange news because Noah had never seen an ocean. Noah had never really seen a large boat before.

And you can go and see a mock-up of this boat today. I think Ken Ham's organization built one. I think it's in Kentucky. They obviously used a lot of modern construction techniques to build it. They needed cranes. They needed mechanical engineering. It is a huge feat of incredible engineering. And God said to Noah, that's what you have to do. And Noah, without any engineering experience, goes and does what God tells him to do.

And the key thing here is, God showed Noah what to do. He didn't leave him in the dark. He didn't leave Noah to work out for himself what was necessary. God made Noah some instructions. And Noah, to the best of his ability, followed these instructions.

[12:50] He went and he got gopher wood, whatever kind of wood that is. And he covered it inside and out in tar to somehow make it waterproof.

And he constructed this enormous boat. But the key thing is, God told him what to do. And today, when we're in the darkness of despair, confused about what we need to do to find and discover and experience the salvation of God, God does not leave us in the dark about what to do either.

God does not leave us in a place where we can kind of flounder around, desperately trying to work out what's necessary for us to experience and discover salvation.

He doesn't leave us in that darkness. Instead, he has sent light. For us, the instruction is not, go and build an ark for yourself.

The instruction is, go and discover the ark I have built for you. Go and discover the salvation that I have completed for you with another piece of wood.

[14:13] With the cross. Because there, that cross, that wooden ark of salvation, I have done what is necessary there for your salvation.

In fact, curiously, just the same as he did for Noah. Because I don't for one second believe that Noah's engineering skills were up to the task of building a 250 meter long boat of wood, having never built one before.

The ark was not an effective means of Noah's salvation had God himself not intervened.

Remember when Noah goes into the ark, we didn't read it, it's in chapter 7, but God, when he puts Noah into the ark, he says, you go into the ark now, and I will shut the door.

I mean, God's salvation is in operation right the way through this story. Not Noah's ingenuity, not Noah's technical skills, but God's provision of security and protection for him.

And once again, Noah has to respond to God's instructions with obedience and trust. And today, God hasn't left us in the dark in just the same way.

[15:30] He has said to us, if you want to discover the salvation that I am calling you to, if you want to discover the hope and the peace that you are invited to, you need to come to Jesus in faith and cast yourself upon him.

It's one of these other moments of calamity in the Bible when the Philippian jailer comes trembling before Paul and Silas. The prison has been destroyed by an earthquake.

He's fearful for his life because if the prisoners have escaped, his life is forfeit. He will have to die for these escaped prisoners. And trembling, he comes before Paul and Silas and he says, what do I have to do to be saved?

His world is collapsing. And Paul and Silas say to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Today, the same instruction is there for us in whatever darkness and calamity we are experiencing.

Whether it is the ultimate darkness and the fear and the calamity of our lostness before God or whether it is the experience of darkness and the consequences of sin and brokenness in this world and all of the different ways in which that manifests itself in our experience, the solution that God provides and the pathway that he has shown us and the road that he lightens for us and directs us towards is the same.

[17:07] He says to us, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your trust in my son because he is your ark of salvation.

And we might say to ourselves, well, I don't know if I can really do that. Well, friends, the truth is it is the only thing you can do.

You can't start behaving as if somehow your own ingenuity will get you out of a lost eternity. And you can't start imagining that your own ingenuity is going to get you out of the darkness of broken relationships and misery because of things that have happened in this world and in your experience it won't.

But I know that Jesus will. But I know that the love of Christ and the fullness of what he has done for sinners and the greatness of the joy that he holds out to his people is sufficient for our sorrow and our pain and our lostness.

And so just as God taught Noah, he teaches us not to remain in the darkness but to come into his wonderful light. And Noah obeyed.

[18:46] There's another verse as well which we don't, you know, we didn't have time to read the whole story today of the flood. But as the floodwaters continue, the ark is there floating on the floodwaters.

God has shut the door. God has sustained them. And there's this wonderful phrase that comes across after God has shut the door that God remembered Noah.

The word remembered in the Old Testament, it's a fascinating word because it means more than just I had forgotten something and suddenly I remembered it. The word remembered in the Old Testament is written remembered in an era where there wasn't Microsoft Outlook, where there wasn't a Google Calendar.

And so I would be completely lost. In fact, I still am completely lost some days without Outlook and Google Calendars. I'm really thankful for my staff at work who help me out sometimes reminding me of things.

But the word remember is crucial because in the ancient world, alliances and treaties and commitments had to be constantly called to mind.

[20:00] You had to remember your commitments. You had to remember that you had promised your allies you would send troops to help them if they were attacked. You had to remember that if someone had shown you favor when you were on the run that you would have grace towards them.

You had to remember the promises that you had made to people in the past. You've got examples of this with David, for example, in Mephibosheth, where David has to remember to show mercy to him for his uncle's father's sake.

The fact that God remembers Noah is rooted in something that God has already done. God, when he put Noah into the ark, the Bible tells us God established a covenant with Noah.

God made a commitment to Noah to save him. And so when the Bible tells us that God remembered Noah, what it's telling us is that God honored the commitments he had already made. That God didn't suddenly think, oh well, there's Noah in the ark. I better do something about that until the floodwaters abated. It's that actually through that whole experience, through that whole terrifying experience, Noah is never distant from the thought of God.

[21:31] Noah is never absent from the care of God. God is intimately familiar with what Noah is going through. And God is mindful of him at every point.

And so, simply today for us, going through these difficult experiences and these painful moments where we just can't see the light because of how dark it is, or for those who are going through these experiences of realizing and recognizing your lostness without salvation and the grim reality of an eternity without God in outer darkness in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I want to say to you that God is a God who remembers his people. It's there for you to come into and enjoy and experience the moment you trust in Christ Jesus, the moment that salvation comes

to you, there is that sense of absolute security because God is not going to forget about you at some point in the future.

He's not going to abandon you. He's not going to let you go. He's not going to leave you in the dust. He will carry you and uphold you and be with you eternally and forever.

And for those of us who are believers, we can sing Psalm 23. Yes, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me and your rod and your staff comfort me.

[23:28] in the midst of my enemies, you furnish a table for me. You provide for me. You have not abandoned me. You are with me always.

God, simply put, remembers us. He remembers you. and he calls to mind continually his promise to you.

And I'm fairly sure that the reason for that today is actually none other than Jesus himself. Because the New Testament tells us that Jesus, now that he's ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, what that says to us is the function that Jesus now has, the work that Jesus is doing today, is making intercession for us.

And there may well be times where that means God the Son, the person of Jesus, is at the Father's right hand and is mentioning us by name.

That's certainly possible. I think, I don't deny that. But at a more basic level, there is his presence. The dust of this world, incarnate in the person of God the Son, resurrected to life, following his death.

[24:45] And he is there as the representative of all of the people who are in the Lamb's book of life. And so all of the believers in all of the history of this world and in all of the future of this world until the Lord returns, all of the believers are there represented immediately at the Father's side.

And the Father cannot forget us. He cannot forget the ones for whom his son died. And so he will not abandon you to abject despair and lostness and overwhelmed, unmitigated sorrow and separation from him.

He will send the Spirit. He will send the Holy Spirit to come in as the comforter who will enter into the lives and the experience of God's people in the midst of all of that sorrow and all of that disaster. And he will comfort us because that is what he has promised. And because that is what his son has earned. And that is what Jesus has done for us.

A covenant has been made, a commitment bounded up in the blood of Jesus, sealed in Christ, has been made towards God's people.

[26:13] And so today, we cannot be lost. We cannot be isolated and separated from God. We cannot know the fullness of calamity overtake us.

And it's interesting again to see Noah's response to that. Because just as Noah had seen the grace of God and believed in him, and just as Noah had received the instruction of God and obeyed him, so Noah, when he sees the remembrance of God, Noah does something.

Noah, when he came out of the ark, having been remembered by God, built an altar and worshipped. And that's what's necessary for us today.

That when we remember and when we discover the abiding covenant commitment of God to us as his people, we're moved simply to worship.

We're moved to awe and wonder, marveling at the grace God has shown us, marveling at his redemption. So I want to encourage you today, if you've known answered prayer, if you've been delivered from the black dog of depression in your experience, if you can look back on times of profound sorrow, and you can say, God has not failed me, then worship.

[27:47] Sing with joy a new song of praise to our God, because he is good and his mercy lasts forever. And so Noah worshipped a God who remembered him.

The story, though, doesn't quite end with Noah's worship. And this I find quite telling. The story ends with the verses that we read at the beginning of Genesis 9. God blessed Noah and his sons. See, the story doesn't end because we're here. Whatever the outworking of this is, the reality is the human race was not extinguished in the days of Noah.

The human race survived. And grace and mercy has been shown over and over. And the reason for that is because when the ark does come to rest and Noah and the rest of the survivors come out of

the ark and they leave it and they worship, God renews his covenant with them.

And one of the outworkings of God's covenant commitment to us is blessing. The word blessing, it's a really interesting word when you try to work out what it really means.

[29:05] I think the best thing it can mean when we experience the blessing of God, the best interpretation I would have of that is that we receive everything that is necessary for us to thrive and flourish in what God has called us to do.

So when God blesses you he blesses you for the tasks he's called you to. He equips you for what you're called to do, what you're called to go on doing, what you're called to continue to do serving him.

You're called by God to go on. When times of sorrow and turmoil and tragedy come in the lives of God's people there is a temptation for us to respond like the world which has no hope in a world which doesn't have the inherent strength to move on and sometimes we might become locked in that past trauma but actually Noah is a lesson for us here because I think in a sense that's what Noah almost wants to do.

He has an experience of some sort of I think survivor guilt. It's really interesting that one of the first things Noah consciously does when he comes out of the ark is he goes and he plants a vineyard and he gets drunk.

Noah is still a broken sinner and his trauma is still with him but God doesn't want Noah to stay there and so God says to Noah I'm going to bless you and I'm going to reiterate a command a function an ordinance in fact that I gave to Adam at the very beginning of creation.

[30:55] Be fruitful and multiply it and fill the earth and subdue it. Noah is the evidence of God's new creation God's new work going on the new world that is now created is now under the same creation ordinance that Adam was given be fruitful fill it subdue it be my overlord within it.

The same task is there for Noah he has to move on and we in our lives we're given the same blessing by God that our lives will not be defined by where we have been they'll not even be defined by what we have come through but we will be defined by the call of God on us to continue to serve him and honour him in the mission that he has given us and in the New Testament that is to honour him in the great commission to go forth into this world into our families into our workplaces into our communities into our neighbourhoods and to there make disciples of all nations and the amazing thing is God blesses us for that task that if we've come to Jesus if we followed the instruction of God in coming to him and trusting in him he blesses us to continue moving forward as his servants and so be lifted up today with renewed strength and boldness in God's service because there is work to do and he has given it to us and he will give us everything that we need to finish the task let's pray heavenly father we thank you today that you are a God who saves and just as you saved Noah you so also save us in the one who is known as the way the truth and the life we thank you today for Jesus the ark of our salvation we thank you that there's hope to be found in him and we pray that you would help us to live and walk according to what he has said to us help us Lord in the midst of sorrow as well to remember that we still have a purpose that you have given us a mission to get on with work to do in this world and so we pray father that you would make us winners of men and women people who make disciples and who seek to disciple others coming after us in that great work as well and so father bless us today in the work of the church bless us in the ministries that we're called to and we ask all of this in Jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to sing in conclusion again in sing psalms in psalm 98 this is page 129 in the blue book page 129 we're going to sing at the beginning verses 1 to 3 you'll sing a new song to the lord for wonder she has done his right hand and his holy arm the victory have won the lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world his righteousness is shown his steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well the covenant he made with them the house of israel and all the nations of the earth have seen what god has done our god who brings deliverance by his right hand alone and we're going to sing these four stanzas to god's praise the tunes warwick will stand to sing oh sing a new song new song to the lord for wonder the lord he has the lord to all the nations of the world

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God has done Our God who brings deliverance By His right hand alone
Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of God the
Holy Spirit Be with each one of us now and always Amen Amen Thank you.