



Part 25 – When you pass through the waters

Genesis 7:24-8:22

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (Isaiah 43:2)

The story of the flood is, on one level, a story about Noah. Certainly Noah, as an upright and godly man, ought to be carefully considered by Christians. However, the story of the flood generally, and the story of Noah specifically, is ultimately about God. Like all of the events recorded in the Bible, the story of Noah is another important way in which God further identifies and reveals himself in the early chapters of the Bible. And fundamental to that revelation of the Almighty is this simple sentence on which the structure of Genesis chapter 8 is built: “God remembered Noah” (vs. 1).

1. God upholds his people

A) The Lord protected and provided for Noah and his family.

- Through the terrifying circumstances of a world-wide deluge, God provided for the needs of his people. They were not passive agents in this. Noah and his family had certain tasks to complete and preparations for their time in the ark. But through it all it was the Lord's provision which sustained them.

B) The Lord gave Noah patience.

- The inspired writer goes into great specificity to record to the day the amount of time Noah and his family were confined within the ark. The ark was no pleasure craft and the conditions would have been challenging in the extreme. At 150 days (5 months) the ark came to rest among the mountains of Ararat (vv. 3b-4). There the ark sat for over two more months (vs. 5). So, the family and all the animals sat in the grounded ark for over sixty days as they waited for the land to dry. Imagine being sealed for seven months within a floating zoo with its vast array of animals with all of the waste they produce, bilge water, sisters-in-laws, mother-in-law, and brothers. Patience never grows in circumstances where it is not required.

C) The Lord gave Noah hope.

- The Lord sustained them. Noah believed the Lord's promise. That hope sustained the family through what must have been a terrifying ordeal. The sending out of the raven and the dove reflect the fact that Noah had taken God at his word. Noah sent out the dove with the full assurance that news of deliverance would return.

2. God continues to relate to his people

- There are many lessons to be learned from the narrative of the flood. But more than anything else it refines our knowledge of God and how it is that we related to him. If you know God — who he is, and what he is like — you'll likely walk in wisdom before him because God is the key to everything. And just as Noah did, we depend upon God's Word in order to know Him. There is no saving knowledge of God apart from what He has revealed by his word.
- Francis Schaeffer often referred to God as the “infinite personal God.” It was a description intentionally chosen to address two principal errors in thinking about God: 1) that God as a person is more similar to us than he is; and 2) that God is simply a name we give to a universal force that surges through all living things. But to describe God as both infinite and personal, is to confess that the living God is beyond our understanding, that he transcends our comprehension, that he is the omnipotent, omniscient, and

omnipresent Creator of heaven and earth, the Ruler of everything, the Judge of all men, whose majesty no one has seen or can see, and that, therefore, he is the only one capable of delivering us from the power of sin and death.

- And yet God may also be truly known. He is a personal and relatable God who truly knows and loves his people. God may be meaningfully described as our Father, our Friend, and our King. “If you can grasp it, it isn’t God,” said Augustine in one of his sermons. On the other hand, no one has ever given such beautiful expression to genuinely personal relationship with God as did Augustine in his *Confessions*. Near the beginning he asks the fundamental question: “Who then are you, my God?” And his answer: “Most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet most intimately present, perfection of both beauty and strength,”
- We do not relate to God or gain access to God by means of our own choosing. If we are to relate to God we must come to him on his terms. And this is what Noah models for us as he exits the ark.

Worship

- The first thing Noah does once stepping off the ark is to build an altar and offer sacrifices to the Lord (vs. 20). In other words, the first human act after God’s gracious deliverance, is worship. Augustine wrote that, “A Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot.”
- It is not insignificant that this first act of worship is one of sacrifice. Sin has not been eradicated from the human heart. Judgment cannot remove sin from mankind. So Noah brings to the Lord pleasing sacrifices of clean animals. The sacrifices were consumed by the fire to represent Noah’s total surrender to the Lord. By this sacrifice Noah was indicating that he was wholly the Lord’s. The Lord was pleased with Noah’s sacrifice (vs. 21). There is an indication of propitiation (a sacrifice which satisfies Divine wrath) in the Lord’s response to never again destroy the earth with water (vs. 22).

3. God remembers his people

Vs. 1 – “But God remembered Noah...”

- Unlike our English word “remember,” which usually suggests that something has first been forgotten, the Hebrew word, especially when used in reference to God, signifies acting on a previous commitment to a covenant partner, a person to whom God had made a promise (Waltke, 140). In the early chapters of Exodus we read that Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt because the Lord remembered his covenant with Abraham. Again, the Lord did not “remember” something which he had forgotten. God’s knowledge is infinite like everything else about him. He knows all things at once; past, present, and future are equally present to the Lord. Unlike us he never has to dredge up a thought from the recesses of his mind. So when the inspired writer tells us that the Lord remembered Noah we are meant to understand that the Lord acted once more upon his promise.
- So to say that God remembered Noah is to say that God acted on the commitment that he had made to Noah; God kept his promise to save him and his family alive while the rest of mankind was destroyed (Sarna, 56).
- In considering the Lord’s commitment to save and preserve his people we must once again look to the significance of Noah’s first act upon exiting the ark. The altar of sacrifice and the sacrifices offered there established a pattern which would be codified in Israel’s law and ceremonies. The sacrifices and accompanying prayers of intercession from the priests would be central to the worship and religious life of the people. The sacrificial system was a routine reminder to the people that sin required justice. God’s holiness demanded satisfaction. Sinners required a substitute.
- The world after the Flood had an altar. In Noah’s sacrifice we have a foretaste of the propitiation (satisfaction of Divine wrath) of the Lamb of God. Why is God so patient with us today? Why does he continue to bear with the world in all its unbelief and ungodliness? Because of the precious blood of the Lamb of God. He bought the blessings of common mercy for the sinners of our world, and the blessings of redemption for all those who belong to him. God spares his people from his judgment, not because they are any better than the sinners who died in Noah’s Flood. Christians can claim no superiority to the world’s sinners. Rather, God spares those who belong to him because of the greater Sacrifice than that which was brought by Noah. God remembers his people because of the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God.