

Genesis 7:17-8:5 God Never Forgets 10/8/17

The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹ And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. ²⁰ The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits^[a] deep. ²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²² Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. ²⁴ And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

The Flood Subsides

8 *But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. ² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³ and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.*

(Pastor prays)

One of the worst feelings that you or I could ever have is the feeling of abandonment. Being lied to makes you angry. Being cheated makes you frustrated. But being abandoned, that's in a category by itself, especially if you are like Noah and you, to the best of your ability, have tried to honor God and do what is right.

To be forgotten carries its own special hollowness. To feel alone, sad, inconsequential and lost. Have you ever felt like God has forgotten you? Like the routine is dull, the friends are fake and the future is cloudy? Have you ever felt abandoned, left, forgotten? The theme of this section is that God has not forgotten.

In the text, Noah did everything he was supposed to do. At 600 years old he built a giant ark. He filled it with all the animals. He obediently got his family on board and he waited. God opened up the skies, released the waters from the deep and wiped out every living thing, including all the people that Noah had grown up with. Think of it – all his neighbors, close friends, all his cousins and associates. They were gone.

Chapter 7:23-24 tells us that only Noah was left and those who were with him in the ark. And then verse 24 tells us that for five long months they just floated with no compass to guide, no rudder to steer, just the aimless, friendless, and uncertain. They were put on hold.

What do you do when you have been faithful? You've tried to be obedient and you feel like you're stuck, like you have been put on hold. What do you learn on hold? These are the silent times, these are the grinding times. When you feel like Noah had to feel. Drifting day after day, night after night, week after week, then months? When you feel like God has not acted in your life in a very long time.

There is a little phrase of Gospel hope. In Chapter 8:1 for the very first time in the Bible, we see the phrase "But God remembered." This is the first time in the Bible we are told God remembered someone, but this is not the last. In Genesis 19, God remembered Abraham and saved Lot. In Genesis 30, God remembered Rachel and gave her a child. The Psalmist says God remembers the afflicted. He remembers us in our low estate. He remembers that we are dust. And I want you to hear it from this passage and from my mouth: God has not forgotten you. I want you, by God's grace to hold on and be able to say with the prophet Habakkuk in 3:17-18: *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

God had not forgotten Noah. He never forgets anything and He hasn't forgotten you. The cross of Jesus reminds us of His love as the eternal flame that can't be put out. I hope you will see that:

God's Grace Is Most Real When It Is Least Felt

So what do we do? What do we look for or hold onto? I'd like to suggest a couple of things.

When You Can't See the Big Graces, Thank God for the Small Ones

In the text, the setting is pretty bleak. The worldwide flood was cataclysmic as described in Chapter 7:22. *Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.* Including all of mankind. If that weren't bad enough, Noah is trapped in this ark with all the animals and has no clue what to do next. And then Chapter 8:1, *But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.*

You have to look hard to see it but verse 1 of Chapter 8 is similar to the first creation account. I have to get technical for a moment but it's worth it. That word "wind" in 8:1 is the Hebrew word *ruach*. It means wind, breath and spirit. It's the word that was used in Genesis 1:2, *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit (ruach) of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* That small breeze in Chapter 8:1 was a reminder that God had not forgotten Noah and where He destroys, He recreates.

James Montgomery Boice reminds us that this text speaks to God's authority over all of nature, that every snowflake or raindrop is under His command. And this reminds us that when the struggling or pain have done their appointed work, it will be removed from us. It's also important to note as you read the story and see the waters start to recede, they didn't disappear all at once, reminding us that God usually works deliverance for us step-by-step and little by little so that we might be reminded each day of our need for His grace.

This small grace of the wind blowing, like a kind word or an encouraging note, must remind us of the overwhelming grace of God in Christ, That while we were still in our sin, Christ died for us. With the small graces of having something to eat or drink, we should be reminded of God's sustaining grace.

Sustaining Grace

As in the story of Noah, God gave Noah the ability to build the ark, He made the ark float. God sealed them in the ark and gave them the necessary provisions to keep all the animals and eight people alive. Today when you are eating lunch after this message, it should remind you of the abundant and overflowing, saving grace of God in Christ. If you are in the midst of pain or suffering of some kind, you are maybe needing to thank God for something else.

That's the *positive* way. Let's talk about what we do with the *negative* things. We are people who go through suffering. We deal with pain. How can you, instead of complaining about the terrible and painful things that you go through, turn it around and thank God for that? Well, we have to change the way we understand our suffering. If you are a child of God, then you need to thank God for sanctifying grace.

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Sanctifying Grace

“Sanctify” means to be made more like Christ. Let's not get that wrong now. If you are a child of God, when you go through suffering, that is not punishment from God. At the cross of Jesus, the punishment for sin was poured out on Christ at the cross. So, the suffering you go through is not the punishment for sin. Jesus took the punishment.

The Bible says that God disciplines those He loves. It's discipline. Hebrews 12:10-11 says, *For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

The fact that you are in the struggle or even suffering is a reminder that God is not done. He is working this for your good, that if you are in Christ, you have been bought by the holy blood of Jesus and you belong to God. Let the small graces or maybe even just the common graces of rain and sunshine and fresh air remind you that God's grace is the most real when it is the least felt. When you can't see the big graces, thank God for the small ones.

Though He Seems Silent, God Still Speaks

In the text, the last time God spoke to Noah was back in Chapter 7. By this passage, it's been a year or so since he's heard from God. That's not to say that God didn't give him some signs or reasons to hope. I mean the dove in Chapter 8:11 with the olive branch was a sign. In fact the dove carrying an olive branch was so moving it's still a sign of peace today.

I want to be careful here. God gives us, in His kindness, small but meaningful things to assure us: a song or a sunrise or a phone call or a picture that holds a memory. Those are kindnesses from the Lord. But we need more. We need "direct revelation," a clear concrete communication that tells us who He is and who we are... Where we are going and how to get there.

In Genesis 8:15 the text says, *Then God said to Noah*. God spoke to Noah and gave him clarity, direction and assurance and that's what he needed and it's what we need: to know that God is here and He's not silent. It's why we hold our Bibles so dear. It's why we stand to read it and preach from it and seek to memorize it and read so our minds and hearts and thoughts are saturated with this word. Because there are going to be times when you feel like everything has been stripped away and you're not clear on the direction you should take and don't feel like you have the strength to take the steps to go in any direction, and you need to hear that God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. It shows us four things.

God is the Creator. He is Holy, Loving and Kind.

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You were made in the image of God but sin has disfigured you and you are in need of help that only God can give.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. He is fully God and fully man. He lived a sinless life, fulfilling God's laws. He earned righteousness and then died in the place of sinners, receiving and accepting God's punishment for sinners.

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Now there needs to be a response. For this to mean anything to you, something has to happen. You must **repent** (turn from your sins) and **believe** (trust that what Christ has done will save you).

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Today's message is designed for two groups of people: for Christians who are struggling, this is an invitation for someone to pray *with* you and *for* you. For those of you who are confused and not sure where you stand spiritually, this is an invitation for you to have a conversation with our pastors and leaders so you can find out what it means to give your life to Christ.

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(Pastor prays)

