

Noah Found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord

Let me begin where the text itself invites us to begin, with a little review, because the story of Noah does not stand in isolation. It rises out of what has already been unfolding in Genesis. We had looked at Cain and Abel and especially at Cain's line, and there was something dark about how that line developed. There were achievements, certainly—music, craftsmanship, the beginnings of culture—but morally it was a line in decline. Lamech boasts in an ungodly way, claiming vengeance beyond Cain's, glorying in violence rather than grieving over it. It is not a line headed toward life.

And then, almost quietly, at the end of Genesis 4, after Seth is born, there is that remarkable statement that men began to call upon the name of the Lord. I have always been intrigued by that. It feels almost like the beginning of a revival, as though among the descendants of Seth something begins to awaken. There is spiritual life stirring in the midst of a darkening world. And that thread carries us eventually to Noah.

When we come into Genesis 6, we come into one of the most solemn passages in all of Scripture. We are told the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth and that He was grieved in His heart. That is not casual language. That is a staggering statement. We know what regret feels like in our own small human way—those moments when we wish something had never been done. But here is God speaking in those terms. It ought to make us stop and think. Here is the Creator looking at a world ruined by sin and saying, in language we can understand, that He grieves over what man has become.

And then comes that glorious turn in the text: *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*

Everything changes with that word “but.” In the midst of universal corruption, grace appears.

The earth was filled with violence. We talked before about that word *hamas*—violence, ruthless wrong. God says the end of all flesh has come before Him. Judgment is determined. Yet what strikes me in the midst of all that is not only the judgment itself, but the way God deals with Noah. He speaks to him. He tells him what He is going to do.

That always moves me. God is not some distant power issuing decrees from behind a curtain. He talks to Noah. Later He will do something similar with Abraham concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. There is even that sense, almost expressed as divine deliberation, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” What does that tell us? It tells us God is personal. He desires fellowship. He speaks with men.

And it is worth lingering over that, because sometimes we are slow in fellowship with Him, but He is not reluctant toward fellowship with us. He wants His people near. He reveals Himself. Even in moments of judgment, that is true.

Then He commands Noah to build the ark. We talked about the gopher wood—how we do not even know exactly what that was—and about the pitch covering the ark inside and out. That still strikes me as one of those beautiful little details in Scripture that can be easy to rush past. The same word used there for pitch is the word used for atonement. That is no small thing.

What did that covering do for the ark? It protected it from judgment. It covered it. It kept destruction out.

And that is what atonement does.

The ark survived because it was covered.

We survive because we are covered.

That is not reading something foreign into the text. That symbolism is woven into the very word itself.

Again and again in the chapter we are told simply that Noah did what God commanded him. There is something wonderfully unadorned about that testimony. No flourish. No self-display. Just obedience. God spoke. Noah obeyed.

That is faith.

We often separate believing from obeying, but Scripture does not do that. Believing acts. If you truly believe a bridge is out ahead, you stop driving. If you say you believe but keep going, your actions reveal otherwise. Noah believed God, and because he believed, he built. That is why he can be called righteous. Not because he was sinless, but because he believed God, and faith is counted as righteousness. We find that more clearly explained in God's interaction with Abraham later on in the text.

And there is something beautiful too in the way God provides for Noah in the task. Noah is not out frantically chasing animals around the world. God says they will come to you. Even in the commands, God is providing what obedience requires.

The text is repetitive in describing the animals—birds after their kind, creeping things after their kind, beasts after their kind. It says it over and over. Sometimes we are tempted to hurry past repetition in Scripture, but repetition is emphasis. God is underscoring something. This is comprehensive. This is deliberate. This is concrete history being carefully described.

And when God says, “You alone I have seen righteous before me in this generation,” we are brought again to the matter of faith. Noah believed, and his household entered with him. We talked some about the blessing that rests upon a household under godly influence. Not automatic salvation, no—but covenant blessing, a setting apart, a sphere of mercy. Scripture does speak that way. A child raised in a godly home lives under privileges and protections that are not present in godless homes.

Then the flood comes. And when it comes, it comes with cataclysm. The fountains of the great deep burst open. The floodgates of heaven open. Waters rise from below and descend from above. Everything convulses.

Sometimes people reduce the flood to a children’s story, but Genesis will not allow that. This is cosmic judgment.

And I have often reflected on the impossibility of treating this as merely some local flood. Water high enough to cover mountains does not remain politely confined. There are no walls around a local region to hold it there. Water seeks its own level. It goes where gravity takes it. The very scale described in Scripture demands what Scripture presents—a universal flood.

And then there is the length of time Noah is in the ark, something easy to overlook. A year and ten days. That is no brief emergency. That is a long confinement. Feeding animals, caring for a family, enduring the movement of the ark through all that time. The patience and faith involved in that alone are remarkable.

And when at last they come out, what does Noah do?

He worships. That is the first thing.

He builds an altar. I love that. Deliverance leads to worship. And, by the way, this is the first time in the Bible where someone is said to have built an altar. We assume Abel built an altar as well because he brought a sacrifice from his flock. But the Bible does not explicitly say that he sacrificed on an altar.

He offers sacrifice, and then comes that striking statement where the Lord says He will not again curse the ground as He had, because the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.

What a profound reason. Not because man has improved. Because man has not.

The flood did not change human nature. That is still the problem.

Sin lies deeper than circumstances. It lies in us.

And that is where Scripture is so honest. It does not flatter humanity. It tells the truth. From youth, the heart bends away.

I remember noticing this vividly with my son once when he was little in a high chair. He was kicking the footrest, making an irritating racket, and I gently held his legs and told him not to do that. He looked me right in the eye and deliberately kicked once more. It was a small thing, but I remember thinking almost with surprise, there it is. Defiance. There is the sin nature making itself known.

We recognize it because we know it in ourselves.

And that is what Genesis is telling us.

Which is why the answer can never simply be judgment repeated.

There must be another way.

And, of course, there is.

Though the text here has not unfolded it fully yet, we know where this is moving. God will deal with sin another way. Through a Savior. Through the Lamb ordained before the foundation of the world.

Even here, in Noah's ark and Noah's altar, those shadows begin to fall.

And when we read this account, I think we miss so much if we only read the surface of it. This is not merely animals entering an ark while floodwaters rise. This is a revelation of the holiness of God, the depth of human corruption, the wonder of grace, the obedience of faith, the shelter of atonement, and the God who speaks personally with those who belong to Him.

These are real people dealing with the real God.

And if we pay attention beneath the surface of the story, there is so much here—not only about Noah, but about ourselves, and about the gracious God who preserves sinners by grace.