

## Genesis 8:1-22

### Till the Storm Passes By

A man once visited an orange grove where the irrigation pump had broken down. The season was unusually dry and trees were beginning to die for lack of water. The tour guide took the man to his own personal orchard, and orchard where irrigation was used sparingly. “These trees could go without rain another two weeks,” he said. He continued to explain, “When they were young, I frequently withheld water from them. This caused them to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of moisture. Now while the others are scorched by the sun, these find moisture at a greater depth.”

What do we do when we face difficulty? Are our roots deep or do we get scorched? It’s been aptly said that trials will either make you bitter or better. Let me tell you, the Flood Noah and his family endured was no picnic. It was a trial of first rate difficulty. Yet in this passage we see how they came through.

Notice first the settling of the storm in verses 1-5. Here we learn a word about protection. Many times our attitude depends upon our perspective. Was the flood positive or negative? Well, that depends on your perspective. Behind Noah and his family was a world that had been drowned (certainly negative). Yet ahead was a world washed clean (a positive perspective). It would be a different world without doubt. Many scholars point out that the geography of the earth was drastically affected by the Flood, concluding that this was when the Grand Canyon was formed. This was probably also when the earth was tilted on its axis, thus producing the seasons (something hinted at strongly in Genesis 8:22).

We need to remember that God’s judgment is often for the purpose of cleansing. That’s hard to remember when we’re going through the storm, isn’t it? Yet, as with all storms, the storm does settle. And as we see it settle in this account, we also see a word about protection.

We notice then that **God remembered** (v. 1). Perhaps Noah felt as if God had abandoned them. After all, they had been floating over a year! As Matthew Henry notes, “very good men have sometimes been ready to conclude themselves forgotten of God, especially when their afflictions have been unusually grievous and long.” Maybe you find yourself in such a position wondering when will my persecution end?; when will the financial struggles be over?; will my family difficulties ever cease? Let me tell you, just as God remembered Noah, He’ll remember you! As one commentator said, “those that remember God will certainly be remembered by Him.”

Notice also that the **waters receded** (vv. 2-3). While these waters receded, Noah and his family just waited! Wait! Isn’t that so hard to do? We have trouble waiting just a moment, yet they waited five months! Five long months while the water receded and they floated. The earth wasn’t flooded in a day, and it certainly wouldn’t dry in a day.

Yet eventually it receded enough so that the **ark rested** (vv. 4-5). We’re told specifically that it was on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. John Phillips makes an interesting observation about this date. He points out that the seventh month was changed to the first month on the Jewish calendar. Exodus 12:2 tells us about the Passover Lamb, which was secured on the tenth day and killed on the fourteenth day. In

Jesus' day, the fourteenth day of the first month would have been the fourteenth day of the seventh month in Noah's day. Jesus rose from the dead three days later, on the seventeenth day. In other words, the ark rested on the same day of the year that Jesus rose from the dead! Now, while there's no way to confirm that for sure it certainly is intriguing. Certainly we learn that God has a time and a place of rest for His people after the storm. Through the storm there's the certainty of His protection. There was that assurance for Noah and his family, and there is for us today as well!

Notice next in verses 6-14, the sanctifying of the spiritual. Here we learn a word about patience. This portion of the story (concerning the raven and the dove) has always interested me. As we consider it, we note the *testing of Noah* (vv. 6-12). I think it's interesting that the raven didn't come back, but the dove did. There's quite a contrast between these birds. A raven is black, whereas a dove is white. The raven is an unclean animal, while the dove is clean. Ravens are wild by nature, but a dove is very domestic for the most part. The raven that was sent out didn't return. It was quite content to feed on dead, floating carcasses. The dove, on the other hand, returned to the ark twice. Perhaps when it returned the first time it was wet and dirty. Nonetheless, it returned.

What's the point? You can be like the raven or the dove. If you're like the raven, you're content to exist off the filth of this world; content on your own, apart from God. If you're like the dove, however, you are dependent upon God and attached to the people of God. Notice that the dove returned to the ark. In like fashion, we need to return to the ark when the world has beat us up! What is that ark? Jesus is the ark! As Matthew Henry says, "as Noah put forth his hand, and took the dove, and pulled her in to him, into the ark, so Christ will graciously preserve, and help, and welcome, those that fly to Him for rest."

When should we go to Him for such help? Well certainly, at any time. But especially in times of public worship. Notice that Noah sent the dove out every seven days. This suggests a Sabbath; i.e., the dove was sent from religious conviction, not arbitrarily. Yes, Christ is there at any time, but there's something special about calling upon him collectively with His people!

But let us also note the *tarrying of Noah* (vv. 13-14). Most of us would have jumped ship after verse 13. They had been onboard close to one year at this point. Certainly they were ready to touch the earth again. But Noah tarries some fifty-six more days until verse 14. What amazing patience! The time to leave was still not right. As Phillips says, "Noah could afford to wait. God was with him in that ark. It was not a question of making the best of it, but of making the most of it. To be shut in with God - how the flesh would fret and strain at such a situation, but how the spiritual man must have rejoiced. It was not too long, not a moment too long."

We often find ourselves in a similar position - having to wait. Many times that waiting is indeed part of the sanctifying process. I remember feeling called to the pastoral ministry. The process took two years. I wanted to get on with it. But I wouldn't have been ready. God was saying wait, it's not yet time. We recall the famous line, "God give me patience, and give it to me now!" Oh to be more like Noah; waiting for the perfect timing of God!

And when that time came, notice the sending of the saved in verses 15-20. Here we see a word about practice. The time had come to leave the ark. We learn two important things about their going out. First, we see they were *sent to witness* (vv. 15-

19). Note closely verse 16. The NIV is absolutely wrong; God did not say “come out.” As the KJV expresses it, God said “GO forth from the ark.” This may seem like semantical gymnastics, but I think it’s an important distinction! God had said “come into the ark” (7:1 - again, the NIV misses it translating the phrase, “go into the ark”). God was in the ark with them! The NIV gives the impression that God was speaking from without. But God was in the ark, and now, he says GO! They were to go forth, repopulate the earth, and fill it with the knowledge of God.

Are we to do any differently? Have we not been given the Great Commission? What does it say? In a word, GO! We say we believe the gospel and that we see a picture of the gospel here in Noah. But friends, you can’t even spell gospel apart from starting with G-O! Let me remind you that God calls us to Himself (“come into the ark”). But God then sends us to the world (“Go forth”).

They were not only sent forth to witness, but also they were *sent to worship* (v. 20). What do they do as soon as they get out of the ark? They worship! You might think Noah’s first concern would be to build himself a house. But he begins with an altar for God. As one commentator put it, “He begins well who begins with God.” Seldom was a greater offering given in proportion to what was available. Our temptation might be to wait until more was available. And isn’t that what so many do with their finances in regards to God? Perhaps it’s even what you’re doing. But you never go wrong when you give to God. Serving God with our little is the way to make it more. We must never think that wasted with which God is honored.

God’s attitude toward all this is seen in the statement of the Sovereign in verses 21-22. Here we see a word about promise. We see the *promise of protection* (v. 21). God says He won’t add to the curse on the ground and He won’t destroy everything again. But further we see the *promise of providence* (v. 22). Until Christ returns, we have the promise that the cycle of seasons will continue.

What promises! No more judgment, even though “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” This is a similar statement to that made in 6:5. Similar, yet distinct. In Genesis 6:5, Moses includes the word “continually.” “The imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually.” Then mankind’s wickedness had reach heights unparalleled since! But here, although we’re reminded of man’s propensity toward sin, I think we’re also pointed toward that great sacrifice for sin. At the cross, judgment on sin ultimately took place - ALL sin was punished. Now there’s no need for such widespread judgment as in Noah’s day. Instead, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

A Pakistani proverb says that tragedy is like being cast into boiling water. If you are an egg, your affliction will make you hard-boiled and unresponsive. But if you are a potato, you will emerge soft and pliable, resilient and adaptable. The events of the flood were certainly not easy for Noah and his family. Perhaps you’re going through some difficulty in your life that’s not easy. Noah emerged soft and pliable, resilient and adaptable. The difficult ordeal indeed strengthened his faith. What about you? How will you emerge?