

Noah and Grace through Faith

By Al Felder

“And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. ⁸But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. ⁹These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” (Genesis 6:7-9)

As we read the Bible, we find that nearly 1,700 years after creation, the world had become a wicked place. In fact, the scriptures teach that man was consumed with wickedness. All of his thoughts were evil continually. Things were so bad that God saw fit to destroy man, and He was sorry that He had ever made man. Just when it seems that all hope was lost, one man found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Of course, we are talking about Noah, and it is the circumstances surrounding this event that we would like to discuss.

As we read the Biblical account of Noah and the flood, it becomes very clear that God was ready to judge the world because of sin. Jesus makes mention of this fact in the New Testament. *“³⁷But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ³⁸For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matthew 24:37-39)* As we read these verses I believe that we get a very good understanding of how men were in the days of Noah. At this time man was completely consumed with the pursuit of material things and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. Service to God did not even factor into the equation of daily life as far as man was concerned at this time.

As God makes His decision to judge man and end his wickedness, one man stands out. Of course, I am referring to Noah. The Bible simply says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. We may often read this verse and not stop and take time to consider its meaning, but it really is a beautiful verse of scripture. I would like to examine it for just a moment so that we can fully appreciate it.

When the Bible says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, it means that God bestowed favor or mercy upon him. Also, this favor or mercy is undeserved. One thing that we must understand is that God would have been fully justified in destroying all of humanity at this time, Noah included. The reason why this is the case is because of sin.

One thing that we must understand, and understand fully, is that sin is displeasing unto God. Notice the first sin committed in the Bible. *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:6)* Now, we often like to categorize sin. In our minds some sins aren't as bad

as others. I believe that this can cause us to make light of some sins. For example, we have what we call white lies. These are lies that are told with good intentions. Maybe we were trying to keep from hurting someone's feelings, or we were trying to cover for someone. We justify it to ourselves, and overlook the fact that the Bible condemns lying.

With that in mind, consider once again the sin committed by Adam and Eve. God told them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Be honest with yourself, how many of us today would really even think that it would be that big of a deal to eat something that God said not to eat. I mean, it's not as if we had murdered someone or stolen something. All Adam and Eve did was eat fruit from a particular tree. The problem was that God told Adam that they were not to eat from that tree, therefore, when they did they committed sin.

All it takes is one sin. *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) In this particular passages of scripture, James, like the Apostle Paul in Romans, is dealing with the Jewish Christians. You see, they still believed that they were superior because they had been given the Law of Moses. Like Paul, James points out to them that they were just as guilty of sin as were the gentiles. One sin was all that it took to condemn them. One sin made them a lawbreaker, and they could never attain eternal life through that system.

One sin was more than they could ever overcome. *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."* (Hebrews 10:1) The Bible teaches us that all the many sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses could not forgive one single sin. All they could do was role it forward to the next year when further sacrifices were required. One sin is enough to condemn us to a devil's hell. One sin is all that it takes.

Well, since the Bible teaches that only Jesus was sinless, we know that Noah too was guilty of sin. Noah was not perfect. There were times in his life in which he had disobeyed God. You see, God would have been fully justified in allowing Noah to suffer the same fate as the rest of mankind. God did not do this, however, God bestowed grace on Noah. God had mercy on him even though he was undeserving.

God told Noah of the coming judgment and gave him instructions on what he must do in order to be saved.

¹³And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. ¹⁵And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. ¹⁶A window shall thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." (Genesis 6:13-16)

God told Noah to make an ark. He told Noah the type of wood that he was to use, the layout of the rooms, and the dimensions of the vessel. Furthermore, the Bible states that the ark was to have one window and one door. God had already formulated the plan, all Noah needed to do was follow the instructions that God had given him.

This was no easy task. The Bible teaches that there was a period of a hundred years between God's warning to Noah and the flood. During this time Noah obeyed God by making the preparations, and he warned his fellow man. *"And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."* (2 Peter 2:5) Day in and day out Noah built the ark just as God had told him to do. This obviously got the attention of the rest of mankind. No doubt everyone thought that Noah had lost his mind. It is obvious that no one believed him because none of them joined in making preparations while there was time.

God extended grace to Noah, but it was through faith that Noah benefited from it. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."* (Hebrews 11:6) Yes, God had grace towards Noah even though he was undeserving, but what would have happened if Noah did not believe and obey God. Have you ever thought about the outcome if Noah didn't build the ark? What if Noah built a ship, but he did not build it according to God's plan? Or, what if Noah failed to warn the world of God's coming judgment? The result of each of these scenarios would all have been the same. Noah would have died along with the rest of mankind.

Well, what is the message for us today? How is all of this relevant to us living over four thousand years after this event? *"²⁰Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. ²¹The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter 3:20, 21) The salvation of Noah and his family was a type of our salvation. God did not just decide to save Noah on the spur of the moment. Nor did he give him instruction to obey that were meaningless, or had no point to them. God purposely did things the way that He did them in order to provide an illustration for us today.

I submit unto you that if you would be saved today, you like Noah must obey God's instructions. Just as he did with Noah, God has extended his grace to us. *"⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:8-10) We, like Noah and all that have come before us, are guilty of sin. That fact in and of itself means that God has no obligation to us whatsoever. He is justified by doing nothing further for mankind. That is why it is called grace. It is grace because we don't deserve it.

God does not owe us anything and there is nothing we can do to put Him in our debt. It is in this sense that the Bible refers to works in verse nine. There is absolutely nothing that we can do in order to earn or merit our salvation. Salvation is an undeserved gift given by God.

There is something that we must understand before we go any further. We are saved by grace through faith. Salvation is not something we can earn or merit. It is not something owed to us by God, but it is something that we must access through faith. It is because of this fact that verse ten mentions works again, but this time they are mentioned in a positive light. The works considered in verse ten are works commanded by God. When we obey God we do not earn or merit anything.

You see faith itself is a work. *“²⁸Then they said unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? ²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”* (John 6:28, 29) We, like Noah, are to believe God’s word. This belief in turn will cause us to make the proper preparations just as Noah did.

Notice the following similarities between Noah’s salvation and ours. God instructed Noah to make one window or source of light for the ark. Today we have one source of light, God’s word. *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”* (Psalm 119:105) The ark had one door or entrance. Today we have one door in which to enter. *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”* (John 10:9) All who were in the ark were of the same family. Today all who are in Christ are of the same family. *“²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* (Galatians 3:28, 29) Finally, there was only one ark built according to God’s specifications. Today, there is one church designed by God. *“²²And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, ²³Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”* (Ephesians 1:22, 23) *“There is one body.”* (Ephesians 4:4) I do not have the right today to change or alter God’s plan in any way just as Noah did not have the right to do so during his day.

Consider once again 1 Peter 3:21, *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* The salvation offered to Noah through water is like the salvation offered to us today through baptism. The water during the days of Noah cleansed the earth of sin, and separated those inside the ark from those outside the ark.

We find that this is the case for us today. Notice, however, that in baptism the water does not possess some mystical power. You can go and immerse yourself in water all day long, and still be just as guilty of sin as when you first started if you are not obeying the command with a good conscience toward God. *“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”* (Romans 6:17) In this verse we find that the obedience is from the heart. In other words, the reason why the

command works is because I believe what God has said, and I submit myself to follow His commands. It really is no different from what Noah did in preparing for the flood.

Notice, however, that it is a form of doctrine that we are to obey. That word form means a type or pattern.¹ Just as Noah's salvation is a type of our salvation, baptism itself is a type or pattern of something. *"³Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:3, 4) Baptism is a type or pattern of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Any person who wants to be free from the servitude of sin must obey from the heart that form of doctrine. When one does this, all sin is washed away. This is not due to some power in the water, our sins are forgiven by the operation of God and the blood of Christ.

There is one final detail that I would like for you to consider regarding Noah and the flood. *"And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in."* (Genesis 7:16) You see, God closed the door to the ark. Noah nor any of his sons closed the door, it was God. He is the great opener and closer of doors. He is the great architect and designer. He is the one who extends grace that we may access through our faith. *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47) Just as God closed the door of the ark, He is the one who adds people to the Church. No man can claim it as a right. Nor can any man be added by other men. Only the operation of God can accomplish this task, but He only does it for those who follow His plan. *"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* (Hebrews 5:9)

¹ Vine, W.E. 1996. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN : Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996. p. 251.