

God Provides A Way

James 1:15 “Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

At the beginning of Genesis 6 we are let on to the fact that everyone, Noah included, is lost in sin. Noah is later said to “walk with God,” but this is only because God granted him “favor.” Favor is the Hebrew word for grace.

Leading up to Noah there is 1656 years, only one person, Enoch, walks with God before grace is given to Noah. Our lives resemble much of the life on the earth for that 1656 years, we are too consumed with our own selfishness and pride and we ignore God. Romans 6 reminds us that without Christ all of us are, “slaves to sin”. We are (were) enslaved to sin.

When we read the story of Noah’s ark many are tempted to say, “that’s not fair.” God’s main goal is not to be fair, it is His glory. From His glory comes His justice. Last week we were shown that God gave people 1650 years, then another 120 while God waited patiently.

- God sent them an example in Enoch, he walked with God.
- God sent them a warning in Noah who preached for 120 years.

God is a just God, and the consequence for sin is death. Everyone from Adam to our current day knows this. Open the newspaper. People die. It’s sad, but true.

The Flood account begins in v.9 with the description of Noah’s righteousness, which comes after God shows him favor. It seems clear from the way the author begins the account that the main purpose of the story of the Flood is not to show why God sent a flood, but rather to show why God saved Noah. In this opening section Noah’s “righteousness” is contrasted with the “violence” of “all flesh.” In describing Noah in this way, the author intentionally draws a parallel between the deliverance of Noah from the Flood and Enoch’s deliverance from the way of death (Gen 5:22-24).

In what follows, Moses allows the reader to peer much closer into the nature of Noah’s righteousness. We are allowed to see him at work. The picture of Noah that emerges from the Flood story becomes a model of the kind of life that is exemplified by grace in the sight of God. It is a picture of simple obedience to God’s commands and trust in His provision.

There are important similarities between the account of the building of the ark and two other narratives in the Torah.

- The account of Creation in Genesis 1
- The building of the “tabernacle” in Exodus 25

Each account has a discernible pattern: God speaks, an action is commanded, and the command is carried out according to God’s will. The key to these similarities lies in the observation that each narrative concludes with a divine blessing and, in the case of the tabernacle and Noah’s ark, a divinely ordained *covenant*. Moses was reminding the Israelites, that just like Noah, they were to follow closely the commands of God and in so doing they would found salvation and blessing in His *covenant*.

What is most apparent in the description of the onset of the Flood is the focus of the author on the occupants of the ark. With great detail the procession of those entering the ark passes by the impatient eyes of the modern reader. Noah’s age, the month and the day of the beginning of the rain, the source of the waters, the kinds of animals and their number--no bit of information is too insignificant if it can contribute to the author’s purpose of holding this picture before the reader as long as literarily possible. It is first and foremost this picture of Noah’s salvation that the author wants his readers to take a long look at. It is only at the conclusion of chapter 7, when the ark is resting safely over the highest mountains in the surging flood, that Moses finally looks at those who did not seek refuge in the ark (vv. 21-23). But even then Moses’ attention on those who did not survive the Flood is motivated less by an interest in what happened to them specifically (“[they] died,” v. 22) than the reason why they perished: “Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark” (v. 23).

It is in the repetitions that the author’s message comes through most clearly. It is repeated four times that those who survived the Flood were those who had done “as God had commanded.” This is not legalism, this is grace, that God has provided a way for his people to actually live in real obedience.

That’s why Noah lives, and that is why we live. It is His favor that we are saved. It’s not about what we do, but about what He does for us. What he has done for us then translates into how we live our lives. God essentially says to Noah, “I am going to save you, I love you, now listen to my words and follow my instruction.”

It is the same thing he says to us. We are follow God and His words because He has provided a way to make it possible: GRACE.

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