



There's a song children learn in church about the flood:

*The Lord said to Noah there's gonna be a floody floody;
The Lord said to Noah you're gonna build an arky arky;
The animals, they came on, they came on by twosies twosies,
Elephants and (clap) kangaroozies roozies;
It rained and poured for forty daysies daysies;
The sun came out and dried up the landy landy,
Everything was (clap) fine and dandy dandy.*

There's much more to the flood story than we think. And what should amaze us about this story isn't the flood of water—God's wrath—but something else.

The Nephilim

We begin with one of the most intriguing sets of verses in the whole Bible.

"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.' The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown" (Genesis 6:1–4).

There are three subsections to these four verses, and the next four verses also have three subsections that will contrast with what's going on here. It's man's perspective versus God's perspective.

Man is multiplying on the earth. Verse 2 says they *"saw"* and *"took."* Where else have we read about this? Adam and Eve and the apple in the Garden! God speaks and limits lifespans. The Nephilim are born and held up as the world's heroes. Wicked people are heroes! A new stage is reached in the development and spread of evil.

Noah

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I

am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (6:5–8).

What God saw was wickedness multiplying and spreading, not man. Verse 5 says, **"Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."** Emphatic! Evil, Evil, Evil. This describes our hearts apart from grace.

Verse 6 teaches us something huge about the personality of God: **"it grieved him to his heart."** God is personally related to his creation. He voluntarily bound his heart and life up with us. God experiences pain, heart-shattering pain, when something goes wrong in the lives of the people he created. Philosopher Nicholas Wolterstoff wrote: "The tears of God are the meaning of history."

In the garden we said to God: "We don't want you." Why didn't the story stop there? Because God decided to have tears, to stay in the game, to suffer. When we ask questions about the problem of suffering in the world, we're only thinking about our suffering. But God is suffering! Flip the question. It costs God tremendous suffering to relate to us and love us while we reject him, and betray him, and make a mess of our lives.

We have two problems in this text: what can be done to fix human wickedness and God's pain?

God speaks: **"I will blot out man whom I have created...I am sorry that I have made them."** Later we will learn of something else God will "blot out." Man is beyond self-help. Noah is the true hero from God's perspective. **"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (v.8).**

This is all we know at this point. Noah's found unmerited favor/grace in the eyes of a superior.

Noah Walked with God

"These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (6:9–10).

Why is it that Noah didn't grieve God's heart, but found favor in it? He **"walked with God."** Wouldn't you like to be known this way? Noah walked to the beat of a completely different drum. He fears God, not man.

Noah responded to God's grace, followed him, loved him. There's two ways to live: walk with God or walk without God. And Noah

has three sons, just like Adam. Noah is a new Adam who God will use to make a fresh start.

“Build an Ark”

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.... For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female’” (6:11–14, 17–19).

The state of the earth was violence. And God saw violence versus Genesis 1:31, *“And God saw all that he had made and it was very good.”*

God takes Noah into his confidence and tells him his plans. God will destroy all flesh with a flood of waters. God is only destroying the self-destroyers. But God will preserve Noah because he establishes a covenant with him. Why? Unmerited relationship. A **huge** God was saying to **little** Noah: “I’ve got your back.” God tells Noah to build an ark. Later God will say “enter” and “exit” the ark.

Here are some statistics on the ark: The ark’s length was equal to 1½ football fields. Its width was that of a semi-truck with two trailers. Its height was that of a five-story house. The deck area was 95,700 square feet, and its cargo capacity was the same as a modern cargo ship; it could’ve carried 125,000 sheep-sized animals.

Eight people and 2 of every living thing, male and female, entered the ark.

Noah Obeys

“Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him” (6:22).

Noah lives by faith! It wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark. It must have taken years and years and years for Noah to cut down the trees, haul them, fit the joints and the planks. And he must have spent a fortune building the ark. Gathering the animals... how did he catch the kangaroozies? And there was no Costco to go to for the food.

“Enter the Ark”

“Then the Lord said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation’” (7:1).

God speaks to Noah a second time, tenderly directing him into the ark before the rains come. Noah doesn’t have a single line in this drama, but his actions speak louder than words—his life is totally God-directed. Noah lives by the ear, not the eye.

We can never dictate where faith will lead us. The first three heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 come from Genesis 4–6—Abel, Enoch, and Noah. All lived with radical faith in God, but their destinys were radically different. Abel believed God and died. Enoch believed God and did not die. Noah believed God and everybody else died in the flood.

Creation Undone for 40 Days and 40 Nights

“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark... And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in” (7:11–13, 16).

God shuts Noah in, then all hell breaks loose. God undoes Creation. It rains for 40 days and 40 nights. “Forty” is a stock biblical word that has hope at its core. When God does something for 40 days, it’s a period of testing or preparation that ushers in a new beginning, a new age.

Israel: heard this message after their 40-year desert journey about to make a new start in the Promised Land; they knew “40” is about new starts.

Jonah: “Yet 40 days and Ninevah will be overthrown.” The greatest sermon ever preached about revival.

Jesus: 40 days tempted in the wilderness; then he began his ministry.

Ark: 40 days and 40 nights, purging the earth; making a new start.

The Waters Crush the People and Lift the Ark

“The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters... Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

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" (7:17–18, 22–23).

The flood waters crush the people. In Genesis 2:7 God formed man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Now everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life dies. The waters blot out every living thing.

But these same flood waters lift up the ark. These same waters that flood the nostrils of every living thing preserve the breath of eight sets of human nostrils and many animals. God's judgments are also acts of grace.

God Remembers Noah

"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" (8:1).

In English the word "remember" means mentally recalling something you forgot. In Hebrew it means to act on a previous commitment to a covenant partner.

Does God remember you? Your 40 days and 40 nights feel like they've lasted forever. But if you have a covenant relationship with him he will not forget you. You need to know this! God makes the waters stop.

"Exit the Ark"

"Then God said to Noah, 'Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.' So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him (8:15–18).

The ark comes to rest in the mountains of what's now the intersection of Turkey/Russia/Iran. Noah patiently waits for God's voice and timing to exit the ark. The total time in the ark is probably close to a year. God speaks to Noah a third time and Noah exits the ark as a second Adam.

What's the first thing Noah does? What would you do?

Burnt Offering

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth'" (8:20–21a).

It rained and poured for 40 days; the sun came out and dried up the land; everything was (clap) fine and dandy. This is the ultimate social project: start over in a utopia with a few hand-picked people.

But everything is not fine and dandy! What went into the ark with Noah? Sin. **"Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"** (6:5). **"For the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth"** (8:21).

The Bible/Christianity takes evil/human violence/suffering far more seriously and realistically than any other worldview. Sin isn't just an issue of bad behavior or getting the right people off the earth and the right people on the ark; it's much deeper than that.

Did the flood solve this dual problem of human wickedness or violence on the earth and God's broken heart and pain over that wickedness? No. The Lord was under no illusion that mankind had turned over a new leaf, that these eight people had learned from the flood and would do better from here on out.

Noah deserved the flood. He grew up as part of the "wicked" crowd. In the next chapter of Genesis we find him drunk and naked. But grace found Noah.

We all deserve the flood. It's not that some wicked people you know deserve the flood and you deserve an ark. The amazing thing about this story isn't God's judgment; it's his grace. He saved Noah! He saved us! The flood points us to something greater.

There is one very big change after the flood: an offering and its aroma. The phrase "pleasing aroma" is actually "aroma that puts at rest." Actually, the name "Noah" means "rest." God's grieving heart is now put at rest, not by the flood, but by the aroma arising from Noah's burnt offering.

This is the first burnt offering, the first sacrificial offering, the first offering where blood is shed, in the Bible. This is an amazing act of grace on God's part. He allows himself to be put at rest. The theological term is **propitiation**. This isn't because man has changed. Mankind after the flood is no better than mankind before the flood. But something in God has changed. His justice and his grace meet in a burnt offering.

This is a solution to a dual problem: God at rest through a bloody burnt offering. Noah's offering foreshadows the ultimate bloody burnt offering. God knew that no animal or human offering could fix the pain and sin of the world. So God sent his Son as the man from heaven to solve the problem.

"The tears of God are the meaning of history." The center of history is a big block of wood: not an ark, but a cross. There the flood of God's wrath pushed Jesus down so we could be pushed up, safe in an ark of grace. Philip Yancey calls it "the atrocious math of the gospel."

The first burnt offering equals a new start for billions of people. God blots out the life of his Son; all our sins are blotted out; our lives are never blotted out.

Floody, Bloody Grace

Do we deserve God's grace? Does this grace not amaze you? The whole of the Christian life is lived under a cloud of grace—floody, bloody grace. Christian, God is not angry with you! He's at rest. You're under a covenant of grace.

Let me tell you about his grace: His grace is bloody; it cost Jesus. His grace is floppy; it never runs out. He rains grace on you for 40 days and 40 nights. And then, he does it again. Grace, grace, grace, pounding down on your heart.

The forecast is always cloudy, always rain, always grace, flooding your life. You never have to check the weather report, wondering if you still have favor in the eyes of the Lord. Do you know that Genesis 6:8 is always your verse: *"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord"*?

Martin Lloyd Jones said, "It is God's accountancy. He's always giving us surprises. You never know what he's going to do. His bookkeeping is the most romantic thing I know of in the world. Our ledgers are out of date. They're of no value. We're in the

kingdom of God and it's God's accountancy. It's all of grace. It's grace at the beginning. Grace at the end. So when you and I come to lie upon our deathbeds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us there is the thing that helped us at the beginning. Not what we have been. Not what we've done. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with grace. Grace, wonderful grace."

Floody, bloody grace! It's yours! This is the forecast for the rest of your life. Don't you dare relate to God or live your life based on your math ("the atrocious math of the gospel"!)...based on your weather reports (uncertain, thinking the clouds have dried up). Taste the rain. Lean your head back, open your mouth, taste the raindrops of grace on your tongue. Swallow them. Don't conserve any of it. You will never run out of grace.

I want this message to get out to a wicked, broken world. It's the world's only hope. The best way to do that, besides preaching it, is for us to lean back together, open our mouths, enjoy the flood, and then watch God unleash his power through us to a broken world. Will you do that with me?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.