

Genesis 8: 1-14; “God’s Remembrance, Our Assurance”,
Sermon # 30 in the series- “Beginnings”, Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 5th, 2005
in the Morning Worship Service.

Noah and his household and all the chosen animals had been in the ark a full year upon the waters of the great flood, and what a baptism it had been. He had been saved from judgment by entering into the ark. He had been delivered from the wrath of God, he had been buried in the ark and passed through the stormy winds and waters, that had risen higher and higher until they covered the highest mountains by 25 feet. And then they had just sat there for 150 days, while God’s justice and anger against the sinners of that old world prevailed. It must have seemed to Noah that God had forgotten him. God had not spoken to him for at least 5 months and perhaps Noah wondered if God would ever turn from the fierceness of His anger. He had been told when the flood was coming, but he had not been told when it would end, and I am sure that this was a great concern to Noah.

Let us understand, first of all this morning, that there can never be any assurance of salvation outside of faith in Christ. The wrath of God prevailed against all the sinners of Noah’s day, and it will prevail against all the sinners of our day and in every generation of men, whoever will not repent, will perish. Those people who will not come into the ark of Christ’s finished work, who will not believe in Him for His perfect righteousness to be charged to their account, can never work out a righteousness of their own that God will accept. There may be a self confidence that some people have or develop in this life, based upon who they are, or what they have done, that will completely vanish in the Day of Judgment. A person’s assurance of salvation can never ultimately rest upon what they have done, but must always rest in the primary sense, upon what Christ has done for them in His death, and His righteousness being accepted before God, and their trusting alone in that. When we trust in God, we are confident in His promise of salvation, that He will remember us. In verse 1 it says, “Then God remembered Noah.” God remembering Noah, and his household and all the animals with him, shows us His faithfulness to remember all His Elect people to do them good, and to give them assurance, when they think that perhaps He has forgotten them. So the question we want to ask this morning is this. “In what ways does God remember Noah so that he is convinced of God’s faithful and loving care towards him as a believer?” God remembers Noah and all His Elect people by giving them assurance, and showing His love to them, in the following ways:

1st of all- God remembered Noah by giving him the assurance of his adoption as a son. (Verse 1-5)

We have seen the picture of conversion in Noah’s entering into the ark. We have seen the picture of Baptism in Noah’s obedience to pass through the waters in

this ark which saved him. Now we see the first steps of God's giving assurance to a new believer, or to a believer undergoing affliction, when it says, "Then God remembered him." Noah is the picture of a believer entering upon a new life in Jesus Christ. There are many discoveries of what God is doing, and what He is going to do, to change things in the life of the believer, that only come with inquiry and investigation. These are things that the believer longs to understand and that he wants to begin to see take place in his life. There is much work that the Spirit of God must do in the life of a believer to give him the assurance of salvation that he needs when he enters upon the Christian life, that it will be so. So the text says, "And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided." This was a real indication to Noah that things were going to change for the better for him. The waters of judgment have subsided, and God uses the wind to hasten the earth's drying. Noah thinks to himself, "I am not going to be in this buried state forever." "I'm going to get out of here." The true believer in Jesus Christ, after he has believed, or when he is passing through affliction, often thinks to himself, "Now what is God going to do with me?" "How am I going to get over this sense of conviction of sin?" "How do I know that God is for me, how do I know that He will continue the good work that He has begun in me?" "How can I glorify God in this affliction that I am in?" "I feel like I am dying inside, and dying physically." "What will God do for me now, to sustain my weary spirit?" The text says that, "God made a wind to pass over earth, and the waters subsided." "The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained." "And the waters receded continually from the earth." "Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat" "And the waters decreased continually until the tenth of the month." "Then the tops of the mountains were seen."

It does the weary soul which is convicted of sin; well; to understand that God remembers us. It does us well to know, as a new believer that God sends His Spirit to give us the sense of our adoption as sons. You remember that in the beginning, in Genesis 1: 2 it says, "The earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters." Here in this passage, we seem to find a similar work taking place for Noah, to give him the assurance that God was going to bring him out of this state of confinement in the ark. The wind is the indication of this and the wind is seen as a symbol of the Holy Spirit working, in the Scripture. In John 3: 8 Jesus says, when speaking of the ministry of the Spirit, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." The Spirit is given to the Christian, sent into His heart and life to be a comforter, to be an advocate, to be a witness to our spirit that we are the children of God." You see this in Romans 8: 15. "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our

spirit that we are children of God.” This is actually what we have, I believe, in Noah in the ark at this time. God’s making a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaging are the picture of the Spirit coming to the heart of any troubled believer to take away their fears that God is not with them, or that God is not for them, or that God will not make a way for them through their difficulties, either spiritually or physically. He comes and shows that prayer does avail, that faith does enable us to look forward with confidence that God will lead us and will sustain us. He will guide us into all the truth, because He has adopted us. We are His child, and He will make a way for us. He would not leave Noah feeling like an orphaned child. And He will not leave you to feel as an orphaned child. He does and will come to your soul and give you that kind of assurance as you trust in the Lord Jesus. He has promised that He will do this for every believer. Look at John 14: 15-18. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you.” I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” This is definite assurance given to New Covenant believers. And Noah knew something of it in the circumstances of the wind passing over the earth and the waters subsiding.

Now 2ndly- God remembers Noah by giving him the assurance of his progress against sin. (Verses 6, 7)

It says in verse 6, that “It came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.” “Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth.” The picture here is of Noah being unable to see the condition of things on the earth, very well, from inside the ark. He is trying to investigate. He is going to use birds to do some reconnaissance work for him. He first sends out a raven. And this raven keeps going to and fro from the ark until the waters had dried up from the earth. I believe that this is a good picture of the believer making inquiries after the state of his own heart. “Has there really been a change in my heart?” “Has sin’s dominating power been broken in my life?” “Am I feasting my eyes on the dead bodies of my former sins?” “Am I able to put sin to death in my life?” This is, I think the picture of the raven. The raven pictures the believer’s inquiry concerning whether or not he has died to sin and is putting it to death in his life, or not. Elijah, in the time of drought, in 1 Kings 17: 6 was “brought bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening,” because God commanded that the ravens to provide for him in this way. So you and I will be nourished in our faith when we see progress being made against indwelling sin in our lives. Romans 8: 13 says, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This is a second line of evidence towards building assurance in our minds as believers. We can know that we are Christians

when we find sin's power diminishing and ourselves putting sin off and putting it to death. We will tear at sin, pick at sin, and delight in its death in our lives. The raven lives in this way. So does the true believer. All this will take place by prayer, concerted effort, and repeated attempts to do it; going back and forth to Christ the ark and looking for strength and rest and peace and grace from Him. And you will look to Him for the results.

But you will make progress and you will only see progress, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 30: 17 says, "The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out." The Spirit will enable you to deal with bad attitudes towards your parents. You will learn to pray for progress against every sin, and cry to God for the death of sinful habits. You will "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving," because, "He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry." (Psalm 147: 7, 9) You will not become anxious or despair about the progress because you will remember the words of Christ in Luke 12: 24, "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?" This is the kind of assurance that God gave to Noah when he sent the raven out to see whether the waters were drying up. So too, you will be able to see the influence and power of sin diminish in you as time goes on.

3rdly- God remembered Noah by giving him the assurance of his hope, that He was, and would be, working to bring forth good things in Noah's heart and well as from the ground. (Verses 8-14)

Noah not only sent out a raven to check out the waters and the dryness of the land, but he also sent out a dove. This, too, I think is of great significance to the believing, but troubled heart, which is looking for assurance. For there is no bird in the Scripture which so typifies a believer as a dove. And there is no bird in the Scripture which so typifies the Holy Spirit, as well. So let us look at both. When Noah sent this dove out, it says that she "found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and so she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth." "So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself." When Jesus Christ first takes you to Himself, you are happy just to be with Him, to have Him in your heart and life. Then when you go out to do his bidding in the world, to keep His commandments and to do His will, you see that there is no place for you to rest in this world. And so you find yourself coming back for rest, and assurance and strength. He will put out his hand and take you to Himself. He will do it over and over again because He is kind. He knows that we need assurance that we are doing the right thing. He says to us in the words of Song of Solomon 2: 14, "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. He is indeed desirous to have fellowship with us and to hear us tell him of all the difficulties, to relate all the reasons that we think that our obedience to His commandments is impossible. He knows that He is well able to

care for us. He is well able to care for us in the time of our discouragements and distresses. He knows that a time will come when we will be able to go out on that mission and by His power we shall succeed.

The reason that we shall succeed in learning to do His will, is because He has been entirely successful in doing His Father's will while He was here upon the earth. In Matthew 3: 16 it says, "When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him." "And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This dove, representing the Holy Spirit, bore witness to the fact that the Father was well-pleased with all that Jesus did. This is why we believe in Him. This is why we must be baptized with His baptism. This is why, when we are lacking assurance, or are distressed with the length of our affliction, that we must pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show us if there is anything fruitful taking place in our heart, whether the life of Christ is developing and flourishing in us, as we take the cover off the ark and look over the side. What an encouragement to Noah when after a few weeks, again he sent the dove out and in the evening she came back to him with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth. Things were growing down there on the ground where only the waters of judgment had been before. What great assurance came to Noah, that God would renew the surface of the earth and to grow things in it again. So too, what great assurance comes to the heart of the believer when the Holy Spirit shows us tokens of life that the grace of God causes to grow there in our hearts. May we see the faithfulness of God in this to ourselves if we are trusting in Jesus Christ. The waters of sin are receding, and new life is growing and many good things are coming for all of God's believing people. May His grace renew each of our hearts this morning to expect great things from Him.