The Lord hold you close and comfort you

*[Jehoshaphat] appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city. He said to the judges, “Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgment. Now then let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.”*

 2 Chronicles 19:5-7

These words are a stern warning for anyone who is in any kind of leadership position. God establishes all leadership; it is one of His means of common grace whereby leadership is supposed to maintain order and peace in society. Of course, with sinful man, we know that this doesn’t always work the way it should. But the Lord will call to account those who do not lead by His commands. It is imperative for any Christian in a leadership position to keep these things in mind.

These things spoken by Jehoshaphat can ultimately apply to any Christian. Whether we are dealing with work or family or even making some decision that involves another, the Lord holds us to these ideals.

This becomes more important when we consider the places in the Bible that tell us that we will somehow rule with Christ. Although we may not understand how, there is some way that we will each be used by Christ is His Kingdom to govern others. In His Kingdom there will be no room for any deviation from what Jesus declares. It would be good for us to practice now.

In Christ’s love

John

 6-19-22

Genesis 6:1-22

We have only come to the sixth chapter of Genesis, and human sinfulness has gotten so out of hand that God has decided to bring judgement; harsh judgement. Mankind is multiplying on the earth as they were supposed to, but along with the population, violence and evil are multiplying also. Mankind in general quickly turned away from God engaging in murder, polygamy, and pride. The beautiful daughters of men were taken by godless men or perhaps even angels who left their proper abode. Powerful men, whether by human or angelic genetics, acted entirely by their own desires, completely disregarding God.

The sin of Adam became spiritually encoded in all who proceeded from him, so that “*every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*.” And this applies to us today. Everyone is capable of doing good, but the motivation for doing so is tainted by sin. The Christian has the righteousness of Christ imparted to them; and that is the only reason a Christian’s good works are acceptable to God.

In these verses, we see anthropomorphic language. God is said to be sorry He made man or that He repented that He has made them. God is unchanging, so He does not repent or change His mind about something He has done. These words are used so that we can have some understanding about what is going on. Mankind has given itself to evil and refused to repent, so God must act. God is patient, temporarily overlooking sin so that some might repent, but sin must be reckoned for; God will not let it slide.

In the midst of all this spiritual darkness, a line of hope was shown through the line of Seth. We know that this line of Seth is where Jesus comes from and Jesus is the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. He is the One who crushed the head of the serpent; He is the tree of life that we all so desperately need. Throughout the Old Testament, we see foreshadowing of Jesus the Christ; over and over it points to Jesus; and the account of Noah is no exception.

Verse 8 provides us with a flash of hope: *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord*. This is followed in verse 9 by, “*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God*.” We need to think about these things a little. If we read over these verses quickly, we might get the impression that Noah was simply able to resist evil and sin, and that he was able to overcome the effects of the fall. Well, as we read the rest of the Bible, we come to realize that this can’t be right.

In Romans 3:10 Paul quotes from the Psalms when he says, “*There is none righteous, not even one*”. Also, we just read in our current verses that *every intent of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually*. There are plenty of other verses in the Bible that let us know that people are depraved and spiritually dead. So, how do we put these things together? The answer is God’s grace, but let’s see how that applies to what we are studying.

In verse 8, the Hebrew word translated “favor” can also be translated “grace”. So, Noah found unmerited favor in the eyes of the LORD. It’s not favor that he earned or deserved; but Noah’s response to this favor was his obedience to God; it encompassed his righteousness and blamelessness. Part of God’s favor to Noah was the Holy Spirit working in him so that he might believe. Remember Romans 4:3, ‘*For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*’ Obviously, Noah believed God, so he too would have been credited with righteousness. By this, verse 9 can say that he was righteous.

Also, verse 9 says that Noah “*was blameless in his time*.” Recall that God Himself testified that Job was blameless. Again, this doesn’t mean sinless. But because God has declared someone righteous by faith, then that person is cleansed of sin and therefore blameless. All of this is possible only because of Jesus and His work on the cross. Jesus atoned for the sin of all those who accept Him by faith; even those Old Testament saints who were faithful before Christ was manifest.

What we see here for Noah is a picture of salvation for us. Even though we make a decision for Christ, God still gets all the credit for saving us because He made it possible for us to make that decision. This is true whether you are Calvinist or Wesleyan in your view of salvation.

Because of our depravity, we will not seek God on our own. In Romans 3:11 it says, “*There is none who seeks for God*”. It is only by the grace of God that He sends the Holy Spirit to work in our minds and hearts to bring us to the point we can accept Christ. The Calvinist says that God has already chosen who will be saved and the Holy Spirit brings those people to acceptance of Jesus. The Wesleyan says that the Holy Spirit brings a person’s mind to the point where they can understand salvation in Christ and accept it if they choose to. Both views can point to Scripture to back them up; and it should be a topic of friendly discussion between Christians who want to have the discussion.

But the overriding point is that we can’t be saved without the intervention of God. Paul makes this clear in Ephesians 2:8-9, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*.” Because I personally lean toward the Wesleyan view of salvation, I can only assume that God offered grace to others during the 120 years before the judgement of the flood, but no one else accepted the precious and merciful offer.

Back to Noah: he can be called righteous and blameless by his faith in God which comes to him by God’s unmerited favor. Noah was so full of grace that verse 9 can say, “*Noah walked with God*.”

Notice that’s the same statement used about Enoch back in 5:22: *Enoch walked with God*. But they are in slightly different senses. Enoch walked with God in much more of a literal sense. God took Enoch alive from the earth to be with Him. So, Enoch was in God’s presence bodily. Noah walked with God in a figurative sense. Noah did what God wanted him to do; he was obedient. Noah walked in the pathways that God laid out for him. He was not like the rest of sinful mankind who insisted on walking their own pathways in rebellion against their Creator.

Each of us, who have the indwelling Holy Spirit, are able to walk with God in this life. When we think of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, that becomes our natural desire; and that is what we truly work at doing. It gives us practice for our literal walk with God in eternity.

One more thing to look at is the effect of man’s sin on the rest of God’s creation. In verses 11 and 12, the earth itself is said to be corrupt. Recall back in Genesis 1:28 that God had given human-beings dominion over the earth and everything in it. When you have dominion over something, you can do it good, or you can do it harm. In succumbing to sin, mankind brought harm to the creation he had dominion over.

Evil had its effect on the animals and the plants; all the living things. Even inanimate things are affected as we see in earthquakes and severe weather on the earth. Because of the evil, the rest of creation, especially living creation, fell under the judgement of God. Again, we need to grasp the horror and

power of evil, of sin. Its effects cause untold damage in the physical world. The increase of sin over the centuries has brought about the conditions we experience today.

God makes it explicit in verse 13 that mankind is to blame for the earth being filled with violence. We can’t blame satan or fallen angels. Satan and demons bring about a lot of problems. By default, a Christian is engaged in spiritual warfare. These creatures will also face eternal judgement; but people are still responsible for their own sin. God makes it clear in verse 13 that He is going to destroy the population along with the earth that they have corrupted. It is God who will bring this about in judgement. We must never forget, that God is loving, patient, and merciful; but He is also just and His justice is coupled with wrath.

God’s wrath is not emotional anger that suddenly bursts out like happens with people. But it is fully under His own control and comes from His righteous hatred of sin. I pray we all learn from this lesson in history. God will only overlook sin for so long, but then He will judge and release His wrath against it. The Bible warns us that what happened in Noah’s time will happen again at the end of history; it just won’t be with a flood of water.

If you are a Christian, God’s wrath against your sin has been satisfied in Jesus. But that does not give us license to sin. Accepting Jesus brings with it the responsibility of obedience to Christ. And like any good father, God will chastise His children when they persist in sinful behavior. But with these warnings aside, the more we come to understand what Jesus did for us, the more our desire becomes to be pleasing to Him.

God tells Noah to build an ark. The Hebrew word used here and translated “ark” is only used one other place in the Bible; it is in Exodus 2:3. It’s the word used for the basket that Moses was placed in when his mom placed him among the reeds of the Nile River. The Hebrew word used for the ark of the convent is a different word. So, for Noah and Moses, this ark is what God used to bring about salvation for His people.

God used this ark to save the lives of both Noah and Moses, both of whom God used to preserve His people. Noah saved humanity from complete destruction and Moses saved God’s people Israel from slavery in Egypt. Both also made possible the offering of salvation for all the nations in Jesus Christ. Certainly, we can see Jesus here in both these men and in the ark itself.

 In both of these accounts, by means of the ark, salvation takes place through water. The allusion to Christian baptism is strong. And baptism is commanded by Jesus; it is a public expression of our commitment to and solidarity with Christ; and it is then a means of grace. Submission to baptism is a spiritual way to grow in grace.

But while all these things take place through physical water and are physical signs, physical baptism is only a part of what is pointed to. There is a deeper spiritual significance to salvation through water. We can look to Ezekiel 36:25, “*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols*.” This is a figurative use of water to represent a spiritual cleansing; and this is what we receive from Jesus who is the Fountain of life-giving spiritual water.

God gives to Noah instructions regarding the dimensions of the ark and what it is to be made of. It is huge. It is at least 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It has 3 decks and lots of rooms. These rooms are probably more like stalls or enclosures for the animals. In verse 16 the reference to a window could either be a window or a roof with an opening under the eve. Either way, it is a means of ventilation to keep fresh air circulating while keeping the rain out.

There are, of course, those who discount the whole idea of this ark as myth or simply illustration to make some point. But for those of us who believe that the Bible is the word of God, while the ark definitely demonstrates spiritual principles, it is an actual account of historical fact.

There have been claims that the ark simply wouldn’t work. As Bible believers and as those who believe in the power of God, it is no problem for any of us to believe that if God wanted the ark to float and function, it would have done so. It could have been made of rocks and God could have made it work.

It is interesting to note, that science has shown, that God did not use supernatural means for the ark to function; He stuck with the ordinary physical laws that He established. Experiments have shown that the dimensions of the ark are perfect for stability and the comfort of the occupants on the rolling waters.

Another objection to the truthfulness of the Biblical account is the fact that several ancient civilizations have stories of the earth being flooded and one or more people survived by building an ark of some kind. It is argued that the Bible is just giving the Hebrew version of this myth. On the contrary, if something as catastrophic as this occurred, it only makes sense that separate cultures would have knowledge of it and make their own stories about it.

Let’s be amazed by what God has done and how He is able to tie so many things together; both physically and spiritually. The Bible is our evidence of how great our Creator is. He is worthy of praise, He is worthy of glory, and He is worthy of our eternal thanksgiving for His mercy.

Prayer

Eternal God, we are so grateful for Your word. Although creation demonstrates Your existence and glory, Your word reveals to us Your plan from eternity past. Your living word reveals more and more to us as we read and study, and as Your Holy Spirit brings to our minds understanding. Your ways are too far above us for us to comprehend; yet You have given us enough to trust in what You are doing.

Because of Your word, Lord, we have hope in the face of the evil in this world. You have explained to us that these things would come about. Although the times are difficult, we need not fear; we need not be anxious. Your word and our lives so far have shown us that You are a very present help in time of trouble; that You care for us as no one else can; that You will work all things to the good for those of us who love You.

Help us to be content to do the work You have prepared for us. We understand that we are called according to Your purpose and that we are blessed in performing that calling. But in view of salvation in Christ Jesus, how can we do anything but whatever You ask us to do. Help us to resist our flesh and obey the Spirit You have given us.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus our Saviour

Amen