May the Lord bless you and keep you

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

 Ephesians 3:20-21

It is interesting in reading some of Paul’s letters that as he is writing, it seems that he becomes overwhelmed with God and bursts into prayer and praise.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would bring this about in our own lives; that as we think about God during our day, we would be overwhelmed by His goodness and His greatness. May we offer spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving for His goodness and be unrestrained in giving God praise for who He is.

As Paul prays here, God is able to do so much more than we can imagine. He is the God of the impossible. We need not fear asking Him for anything because nothing is too hard for Him. But more importantly, He has an eternal abundance in store for all who are His people.

Just knowing that we are promised eternal life in Jesus Christ is so far beyond what we deserve; it is hard to think that God’s generosity would continue with wonderous delights forever. But believe Him; that’s what’s coming for His people.

In Christ’s love

John

 7-10-22

Genesis 8:1-22

*But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark.* At first reading, this seems kind of strange. Did God get busy and forget about Noah during the 150 days the ark floated around on the water? As we read the Bible, we learn that God is all-knowing and all-powerful; the idea that He forgot about Noah just doesn’t make any sense. So, it must mean something else.

Think for a moment about something significant that took place in your life: it might be your wedding day; or the birth of your child; anything that has a permanent place in your memory. You say that you remember those days or those events. It’s not that you forgot them; you remember them because you haven’t forgotten them. So it is with God and Noah; the living persons in the ark are important to God and He remembers them.

Keep in mind that it is not the ark that saved Noah: God saved him. The ark is simply the means God used to save the lives of Noah and his family and all the animals. The ark was the means for God to keep the breathing forms of His creation alive so that they could repopulate the earth.

And God remembers us.

God is the One who saves us in Jesus Christ. Jesus is our ark who brings us safely through life in to a new creation. Think about what the thief on the cross said to Jesus in Luke 23:42, “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!*” The thief was not simply asking Jesus to recall that he existed. The thief wanted to be with Jesus in the Kingdom. In those moments on the cross, the thief came to realize that he was about to drown in the flood of his own sin; that Jesus is the God who saves; and the thief called upon his only hope: the mercy of God.

And so it is for us. We must call upon Jesus Christ to remember us; depending on His great mercy and on His atoning work on the cross. Nothing else will bring us out of the sin we are drowning in. And God is faithful to save; He will not turn away any who come to Him.

The second part of verse 1 says, “*and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.*” God controls nature and He caused the wind to pass over the earth. Naturally, the wind would speed up the process of evaporation. Evaporation is what would return the water to the sky; to the place it is kept above the firmament God created on the second day.

There is more in this verse. Keep in mind that the account of the flood becomes a “re-creation” story. In many ways, God is starting over again. In Genesis 1 verse 2, the earth is covered in water as it is here in the flood account. In the same verse, the Spirit of God is over the waters. The Hebrew word for spirit and wind is the same; the context determines which meaning it has. Still, it is the same word describing what is over the waters of the earth in both cases.

There is an interesting comparison here. God had to have a type of re-creation of the earth because mankind messed up the first one and didn’t do what he was supposed to do. In the same way, God chose the people of Israel to be a holy people and bring the nations into a saving relationship with God; which they failed to do. So, God sent Jesus into the world to do what the Hebrew people were supposed to do.

We can see how Jesus sort of reenacted Israel. He was in the Promised Land like Abraham was, had to go to Egypt, was called out of Egypt, learned and obeyed all of God’s Laws, performed the perfect sacrifice to atone for sin; then, He continued working through the apostles and the disciples to spread the way of salvation to all the nations.

The water had covered the earth for about five months; then it took another five months to recede. During the time it subsided, the water returned to its underground holding places and evaporated back into the sky; thus, it returned to the places God put it when He made the firmament back on day two of creation. Even after the water receded, it took another couple months for the ground to dry out. All in all, they spent one year and ten days on the ark.

The Bible tells us that the ark landed on the mountains of Ararat. Notice that it says “mountains”, so it is referring to a range of mountains not a specific mountain. There is a Mount Ararat today; whether it is the original one or not is unknown. This mountain range lies between the countries of Turkey and Iran. As you can imagine, no one is allowed to go there now and look around.

There have been reports of sightings of a massive object in basically the shape of a ship. There have also been expeditions to the area looking for evidence of the ark. Many of these expeditions have been undertaken by Christians who would like nothing better than to find the ark; but it has not been found. There have been photos that give the appearance of a ship, but these could easily be rock formations. There is the additional problem that this is a very hostile environment. The ark would have been subjected to ice, snow, and volcanic activity for the several thousand years.

If God wants the ark preserved, it will be preserved; if He wants it to be found, it will be found. Here is the main thing: We believe the ark account took place because the Bible tells us it did. We believe the Bible because it is the word of God and it is true. Now, it would be really cool to find the ark; just because it would.

We must resist the temptation to think that if the ark was found, it would prove the Bible and more people would believe it. Again, we don’t need the ark, the Bible proves itself. But even finding the ark would not convince the depraved human race of God’s truth.

Think of Jesus telling the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back to his brothers to warn them about the hell they were heading for. He felt that if someone rose from the dead, the brothers would believe him. But Abraham assured the rich man that if they don’t believe the Bible, they wouldn’t even believe someone who had risen from the dead. It is the same with the ark. Even if it is found, those who refuse to believe the Bible will not be convinced. That is how stubborn the heart of man is.

Noah was obviously a very patient man. While he sent out some birds to try to gather information, and based on that information he removed the covering of the ark to look around and let some sunshine in, he didn’t leave the ark until God told him to.

Noah released a raven first. It flew here and there, or to and fro; ravens aren’t picky about what they eat so it could have survived in the early environment after the flood. Those words can also have the meaning that the raven flew back and forth to the ark. In other words, it may have made several trips to explore the land and then returned to the ark afterwards.

The dove was a little more delicate, needing seeds and grains to eat. When it returned with an olive leaf, Noah knew that plant life was growing again. The theme of re-creation continues. The LORD brought forth plants on the third day; before He created the animals and people.

In verses 13 and 14, the English word “dry” is used three times and it can be difficult to make sense of what is being said unless you know that two different Hebrew words are being used. The two words have a different sense of “dryness”.

In verse 13, we are told that the water was dried up from the earth. Also, Noah removed the covering of the ark and he could see that the surface of the ground was dried up. The word for dry here has the idea of “to make free of moisture”. It would seem to indicate that there wasn’t much in the way of water still laying on the ground, but there was still mud.

In verse 14, it is almost two months later and we are told that the earth was dry. The word for dry here means “to be completely dry”. The surface of the earth was no longer under the effect of the flood; it had gone back to dirt. It was at this point that God called Noah and everything else with the breath of life out of the ark.

It is interesting to note that this second form of the word for “dry” is the same word that was used when God commanded dry land to appear on the third day of creation. When God called the land out of the water, it wasn’t mud, it was good dirt that could sustain life. In this first case, God used supernatural means to bring about the dry land: He called it forth and it happened. Here in chapter 8, God used natural means to achieve the same results.

When we pray, we must be careful that we don’t try to dictate to God how He answers our prayers. So often, we expect and demand a miracle. God is good to hear our prayers and act on them in the best way. He is also sovereign God and we are merely His creation. Make your requests, and then patiently leave it to Him how He answers.

Noah was obedient to God. He had evidence that the flood had subsided and he could see that the ground was drying up. Still, he waited until God told him to leave the ark. He depended on God, not his own senses. The Bible has several accounts of those who didn’t wait for God and followed their own way of dealing with things. They believed God’s promises, but when the promise wasn’t fulfilled in their own timing, they attempted to “help” God a little. The results were always a disaster. Proverbs 3:5 is true: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.*

God had Noah come out of the ark and bring everything else with him. God wanted them out of the ark “*that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.*” This is the same command God gave His creatures during the original creation. Once more, we see the re-creation taking place.

It is truly amazing, that the first thing Noah thought to do after leaving the ark, was to worship God in thanksgiving. Now, Noah had been worshiping God all along by his obedience. He had worshiped previously in his life by faithfully preaching, by spending 120 years building the ark, by patiently performing all the work of caring for the animals on the ark, and waiting for God to tell him the time to leave. Now, Noah worshiped God by thanking Him for preserving life and being faithful to His promises.

Consider how important it is for us to worship God and all the ways there are to do it. Worship itself is a sacrifice, but we don’t offer animal sacrifices anymore. The time for that is past and Jesus has fulfilled all the blood sacrifices. We ought to continually worship God with the sacrifice of obedience to His commands; loving God and our neighbor even when it is inconvenient or costly. We worship Him by being in awe of who He is and all that He has done. We need to worship in thanksgiving. We are so very forgetful: we ask God to provide and then don’t thank Him when He answers. Even more, be grateful for salvation. He is amazing God, who provides salvation at great cost when we don’t deserve it, but then continues to be gracious in wanting to give more.

Noah offered a burnt offering; this type of sacrifice is totally given to God. Everything of the animal is burned leaving nothing to be used by the person. Verse 21 says that the LORD smelled the soothing aroma. This is figurative language. It means that the LORD is pleased with Noah’s faithfulness. The LORD accepted Noah’s offering because it was offered in faith. God always has and continues to delight in the faithful sacrifices of His people.

God the Trinity has a conference with Himself. He states that mankind’s heart is bent on evil. This is the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity doesn’t mean that everything in a person is as evil as it could possibly be, it means that there is no part of a person that isn’t affected by sin. Our thoughts, our emotions, our desires, our motives; even our bodies are all tainted by sin.

Recognizing that people’s natural response to everything is evil, God says that He will not further curse the ground; He will not make things on the earth worse than they are. He will not again bring judgement by destroying every living thing as He has done. In other words, not by flood.

For the year that Noah was in the ark, the normal cycle of seedtime and harvest was interrupted. God has decided that will not happen again. Although we may see local variations, worldwide the seasons will continue. This is something we can count on as it is a promise that comes from God.

But we mustn’t miss the line “*While the earth remains*”. Things will not simply go on like this forever. History will come to an end. This earth will come to an end. And whether we are alive or dead when that happens, we must be ready for it. And having life in Jesus is the only way to be ready.

Prayer

We worship You almighty Lord God, You have created all of heaven and earth, and You sustain all creation by the power of Your will. You are worthy of all praise and honor and glory. May all of creation praise You. May Your people give You the honor You deserve, along with all the angels in heaven. You inhabit the praises of Your people; may Your people provide a glorious habitation.

Your word shows us again and again, that You are the means of salvation for Your people. You saved Noah from the flood; You rescued Lot from the destruction of Sodom; You brought Your people Israel out of slavery in Egypt; You delivered Daniel from the den of the lions. Each of these shows us that You are able; that there is nothing from which You cannot protect. We owe You all our trust.

So, we can now be confident that You are able to save us even from our sin and that You have done so through Jesus Christ. We proclaim, that as Your word says, our salvation is complete by faith in Him. His work on the cross is sufficient and perfect to make us acceptable in Your presence. Jesus has saved us from the flood; from Sodom; from slavery; and from the roaring lion who seeks our soul.

Thank You Lord Jesus, it is in Your name we pray

Amen