

Text: Genesis 8:1 – 9:17

Title: “Things God Remembers”

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Place: NBBC

Introduction: Note that last week we saw from Genesis 7 the importance of remembering the Flood. Now in this passage, we read about some things God remembers (8:1, 9:15-16). Now when I say that I have remembered something, like where I put my keys for instance, I normally mean that I have stopped forgetting something. God’s remembering never involves correcting forgetfulness. Instead, when the Bible tells us that God remembers, what it means is that He is beginning to act on a promise that He has never forgotten. Leupold: “God’s remembering is not to be thought of as over against the possibility of forgetting, as would be the case with man; but rather as a divine activity whereby His ‘covenant terms’ . . . will be vividly before Him, and man may take you from the fact that God thus thinks upon what He promised” (342). With this preliminary understanding, I want us to see from this passage some important things that God remembers.

I. God remembers blessing in difficult times (8:1-14).

A. Rest is a blessing in difficult times (8:4, Noah’s name is related to the Hebrew word for *rest*).

Illustration: I can remember my college history teacher, Dr. Panosean, who prior to every important test he gave us would encourage us by saying, “This too shall pass.” Evidently, that phrase is connected to an old Jewish parable about King Solomon, who sent one of his servants to find a fictitious ring that could make happy men sad and sad men happy. The servant ran into an old man who engraved this phrase on the ring: “This too shall pass.” When happy men read that, they are sobered; when sad men read that, they are relieved. Abraham Lincoln said of the phrase, “How much it expresses! How

chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction!”

Application: Difficult times are temporary, not eternal. They have an end. We need to let difficult times come to their rightful end. As we go through them, we need to understand that rest is coming. Rest is important in difficult times.

B. Patience is a blessing in difficult times (8:10, 12).

Application: Did you notice that Noah had to learn to wait for the end of difficult times? We are told twice that he did so patiently. We often want to rush on to some new thing that we think will relieve the difficulty before its end, yet God allows us to experience difficult times to help us develop the kind of patience Noah experiences here. He did not resort to complaining or quitting; he patiently waited for God’s plan.

II. God remembers the worship of His people (8:15-22).

A. Worship is obedience God sees (8:15-19).

Application: Worship is obedience and always requires obedience. We live in a day in which Christians have come to believe that good worship always requires some kind of elation or exuberant feeling. People think that because our culture has been conditioned by rock-n-roll. We are not told of Noah’s exuberance as he worships; we are told about his obedience.

In his book *Grace Awakening*, popular Bible teacher Chuck Swindoll has a chapter he called “Squaring Off Against Legalism.” In that chapter he speaks of the importance of freedom as we experience God’s grace, rather than the importance of obedience: “Grace also brings a freedom . . . to become all that He meant me to be, *regardless of how He leads others* [italics his]. I can be me – fully and freely. It is a freedom to know Him in an independent and personal way. And that freedom is then

released to others so they can be who they are meant to be—different from me!” (80). Biblically, the key to Christian growth is not freedom to be different from one another, but freedom to be more like Christ, who was obedient.

On the next page the author criticizes what he calls “Legalism” this way: “In so many words, legalism says, ‘I do this or I don’t do that, and therefore I am pleasing God.’ Well, had Noah not done exactly what God said, his worship of God would have not been pleasing to Him. It would have been a hypocritical sham and mockery. That is not legalism. That is Genesis 8.

B. Worship includes offerings God sees (8:20-21a).

Application: God is the one who ought to be pleased with our worship. Worship is not about receiving from God, it is about giving to God. The offering Noah offers here is called *a whole burnt offering*. The law later shows us that the whole burnt offering is a freewill offering and an offering of thanksgiving (Lev. 22:17-25; 15:1-11). One commentator (Leupold) describes the symbolism of the whole burnt offering as follows: “it must be borne in mind that the chief thought behind an *’olah* was to typify the idea of complete self-consecration, even as the offering in its entirety ascended to God in the fire” (323). We, of course, must give ourselves to the Lord in order for our worship to be acceptable to Him (Rom. 12:1, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”).

C. Worship depends on forgiveness God gives (8:21b-22).

Application: The Lord repeats the truth of the depravity of mankind here (cp. 6:5). Notice that chapter 6 was exceptional because Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Here our statement in 8:21 about the sinful depravity of man still

applies even though the only men and women left on earth were those righteous persons saved in the ark. This helps us understand the nature of the favor God showed to Noah. It was not based on Noah's good nature; it was based on God's goodness and grace. Noah is still a sinner, as we shall continue to see, but he could worship God because God had forgiven his sins by grace. Noah accepted that salvation by faith.

III. God remembers to care providentially (8:21-19:17).

Application: God's work of providence restores to the world through His care what His work of judgment had taken away. Every good give comes from above (Jam. 1:17).

A. He cares for the world through reproduction (8:17, 9:1, 7).

Illustration: When I was growing up the global crisis we were all supposed to be fearful of was overpopulation.

Application: God repeatedly commands that mankind should reproduce profusely. Man is not this planet's enemy, and when we utilize its resources we are not committing sins against an otherwise pristine wilderness. The planet was put here by God for us to fill and to use for His glory. We ought to always take care of it as we use it, but we should not view our use of it as somehow a sinful violation of a natural order.

Children are a blessing from the Lord. We need to resist the selfish modern view that kids are somehow a nuisance that should be avoided at all costs. Abortion is this selfishness.

Illustration: Did you see the report this past week about the mother that jumped off an overpass after throwing her kids off into oncoming rush hour traffic? Only cultures that have lost sight of the preciousness of the gift of children produce that kind of news stories. The gift of children is a gift of God's blessing.

B. He cares for the world with food (9:2-3).

Illustration: I must say that every time I go fishing I seem to disprove the plain teaching of God's Word here that all the fish of the sea have been given into the hand of mankind for food. The ones I'm trying to catch never reach my hand, but then I see the skill of guys like George and others and my faith in the Scriptures is once again restored.

Application: God here gives animal life into the hand of mankind for food. *To be given into the hand of someone* this way is a Hebrew idiom for coming under the absolute control of someone. The Bible speaks of coming into the hand of your enemy this way. God gives man absolute control over animals for food. Animals have no rights before humans; humans have absolute control. This difference comes from the fact that humans bear the image of God, and animals do not (v. 6).

We need to thank God for our food because He is the one who gives it to us. God puts a fear in the animals, which means that we have to work for this food. It is not supposed to be handed to us; we need to raise it, hunt it, and fish for it. This is authorization to eat, it is not a guarantee that we will eat.

C. He cares for the world with transcendent moral law (9:4-6).

1. Do not eat blood (v. 4). The prohibition against eating flesh with blood is not a phobia or taboo. There are some laws of God that have no apparent explanation as to why they are wrong, except that a transcendent God says they are. People view homosexuality today as acceptable and any law against it as merely a phobia or a taboo. They claim that it does not hurt anyone else and so is ok. What God says doesn't matter to them, only whether someone will get hurt. Those who deny the veracity of the Old Testament would normally do the same thing with this law against consuming meat with blood. But right and wrong depend only on what God says.

Of the two Hebrew grammatical conventions for a prohibition, God uses the stronger as He prohibits the consumption of blood. He sanctifies blood by setting it apart this way. He does so because He identifies blood as the center of physical life, and in so doing He foreshadows the truth that without the shedding of blood, the giving of physical life, there is no remission of our sins. Redemption's plan from the beginning stipulated that blood was special, because Christ would have to shed His blood as the Lamb of God to pay for our sins.

2. Do not commit murder (v. 5-6). Did you notice the reference to mankind as one another's *brother* in verse 5? This answers pretty directly the question that Cain asked after he murdered Abel, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). We are one another's brother, and we are one another's keeper. Luther understood the importance of this passage not only to the responsibility of capital punishment, but also to the establishment of civil governments among men (Leupold, 333).

D. He cares for the world with a covenant (8:21-22, 9:8-17).

Application: The Bible clearly says that the sins of mankind cannot make the seasons stop. According to God's promise, cold will not end, and neither will winter. The warnings of the priests of global warming today are in direct opposition to the truths promised by God in Genesis 8-9. They say cold is going to stop, and they warn of the dangers of flooding on a global scale. Our text makes clear that we need not live in fear of these things anymore. The rainbow signifies this promise.

Illustration: One of our neighbors in town wrote a fascinating article on global warming that appeared in March's *New Boston Bulletin* called, "Another Point of View: This may be inconvenient for some." In it he listed a number of reasons for being skeptical about the conventional political wisdom regarding man-made global warming:

- (1) Most scientists do not believe human activities threaten to disrupt the earth's climate.
- (2) Our most reliable sources of temperature data show no global warming trend.
- (3) Global climate computer models are too crude to predict future climate changes.
- (4) The IPCC (UN) did not prove that human activities are causing global warming.
- (5) A modest amount of global warming, should it occur, would be beneficial to the natural world and to human civilization. Those who care for the snow around here agree.
- (6) Efforts to quickly reduce human greenhouse gas emissions would be costly and would not stop earth's climate from changing.
- (7) Efforts by state governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are even more expensive and threaten to bust state budgets.
- (8) The best strategy to pursue is "no regrets."

Heeding the advocates of man-made global warming takes a lot of faith, especially when it means trusting their word over God's plain rainbow promise in the Genesis record.

God is one who binds Himself to this covenant (9:9, the emphatic *I myself*). And He assigns a sign to this covenant, the rainbow. Two other things are called *signs* of God's covenant in this sense in Scripture: (1) circumcision and (2) the Sabbath. Signs of the covenant are symbols of spiritual truth bound up in the covenant they represent.

Delitzsch, perhaps better than any other, has captured the significance of the rainbow: "As it shines forth against a dark background, which but shortly before flashed with lightnings, it symbolizes the victory of bright, gentle love over the darkly luminous wrath; growing as it does out of the interaction of sun and dark clouds, it symbolizes the readiness of the heavenly to interpenetrate the earthly; extending from heaven to

earth, it proclaims peace between God and man; reaching, as it does, beyond the range of vision, it declares that God's covenant of grace is all-embracing" (Leupold, 340).

Conclusion: In spite of man's sin, God remembers to keep His promise, and we can trust Him with confidence today. Have you entered into the covenant of salvation with the God of Noah? Can you see in the rainbow how gracious promise is offered instead of judgment? Do you know the God who remembers blessings in difficult times, the worship of His people, the care of this world, and most of all your need for a Savior from sin this morning? Would you like to?

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

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