

Genesis 6: 8, 9- “Noah, Perfect in his Generations” , Sermon # 25
in the series - “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 18th, 2010, in the Morning Worship.

The words, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” are a sharp contrast to what we find in verse 7 when God says, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.” But as we shall see this morning, there is always a sharp contrast between God’s dealings with the wicked and His dealings with the righteous. The difference is all as a result of His grace. We should each of us ask ourselves this morning, “Have I found grace in the sight of the Lord?” “Am I to be found a part of the sinful, corrupted family of mankind this morning, or have I found grace?” All the people in the world, besides Noah and his immediate family, are described as “corrupt” and “having corrupted their way upon the earth.” Noah is described as “a just man, perfect in his generations.” Ask yourself, “How would God describe me?” This description of Noah as perfect in his generations must be understood in light of this statement of verse 8, that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” And that statement can only be understood in relationship to what God would do for Noah in establishing His covenant with him. God’s covenant with Noah was, that he would enter the ark, as it says in verses 18-20, “he, and his sons, his wife and his son’s wives and every living thing of all flesh represented, two of every sort, into the ark.” It was a covenant of grace which led to grace being seen at work in a perfect way in Noah’s life. This is not sinless perfection, but rather Noah’s entering in, to all that God had shown him, and given him, and prepared for Him in grace. It is grace that brings salvation, and that salvation, since it is all of God, is His perfect way to bring sinners into a better state, that is, to make sinners into saints. Noah was a perfect man, but still only a sinner saved by grace. Here today we find in these words what is called an antinomy. We have two truths that apparently contradict each other, but are both true. But it is true that Noah was a sinner and yet he is seen by God as being perfect. He was brought to be a man of integrity in his lifetime, by that grace, and made into a blameless man by grace, as the margins of our Bibles tell us the word which is translated “perfect”, can be understood.

We want to examine in greater depth what it means that Noah was perfect in his generations. We want to better understand this term “perfect”, for it will help us to better understand how to live the Christian life to which we are called in the gospel, how to live in the presence of an unbelieving world, even as Noah was. I believe that Noah is being spoken of as perfect in the following 3 senses.

1st - Noah was called perfect because he was just, and he is called just, because of the grace of the covenant which God made with him.

Noah was a man who was just, it says in verse 9 . He was right with God, right

in relationship to God, and living a righteous life, as we shall see in points 2 and 3. Noah was just, because he was justified by faith in God. Justification by faith alone is a doctrine that was just as true for Noah in his day, as it is for us who live in New Testament times. Noah had a faith which was a saving faith. Saving faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and at the time that it is heard, the Spirit of God gives a sinner who is being saved, the spiritual ability to act upon what is being understood and received concerning Jesus Christ. It is the work of the Father in conjunction with the Holy Spirit to effectually call sinners into fellowship with the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we learn in 2 Thessalonians 2: 13, 14. "But we are bound to give thanks for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the Holy Spirit who strives with the sinner, who brings him to a true view of himself and his sin, and then who regenerates the heart, so that faith becomes an active, reliable principle in the sinner's heart. Its first act is to believe in Jesus Christ which results in justification, God's declaring the believer righteous.

Noah did not know any of this blessed gospel truth as we have it laid out for us in the New Testament. But he had believed the promise of Genesis 3: 15. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you head, and you shall bruise His heel." This promise would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ as the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. Noah believed in this promise and was justified, although He didn't know how long it would be till "the seed" would come, or what His name would be. He did know the reality of the Lord speaking to him. He knew the reality of what his heart would be like if he did not act upon what God said to him. This faith, God had created in his heart. It was grace that he found that caused him to differ. (1 Corinthians 4: 7) "What did he have that he had not received?" "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith, and that (both the grace, and the faith which is born out of grace, being given) not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2: 8, 9)

It was the grace of the covenant that God was making with him alone, in his generation, that caused him to react in this way, to receive this word to build an ark. Verse 18 says, "But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark--you and your sons, etc." This covenant that God made with him was based upon the Eternal Covenant of grace; what Jesus Christ would do in purchasing grace for sinful men like Noah, in accordance with God's Election. Jesus Christ would so live and so die, in a perfect way, that men like Noah could be seen as "perfect" in God's holy evaluation of them. God would impute Christ's grace to them as they looked forward to what He would do on their behalf. This grace, to Old Testament saints, was "found" by them, being applied to them preveniently. This is an old fashioned word used a lot by the Puritans, which means that old testament people who believed in God's promises were given grace

in anticipation of the work which Christ would surely accomplish later, when he came. They received it before Christ ever walked upon the earth, but they received it based on the Eternal Covenant of grace between the Father and the Son. This is how Noah found grace, and this is how faith was created in him to be seen and to become the man described here as being perfect in his generations.

2ndly- Noah is called perfect in his generations, because he cultivated, by faith, a relationship of obedience in his heart and mind to God.

No man is truly perfect by nature, or in his obedience, except Jesus Christ. We are called to be perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5: 48) But not one of us can do anything in a perfect way without the grace of Christ. We are complete and perfect in Him. But when we find grace in the eyes of the Lord, we learn obedience. We begin to make progress as people of integrity, by means of a humble faith. James 1: 21 says, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” Saving faith humbles itself to receive all of God’s words, both with regard to how we are justified and how we are sanctified. If you will turn with me to Hebrews 11: 7, we will open this truth up a bit. Once faith is established as a living and abiding principle in the soul of a person, it begins to exercise itself in seeking to know the Lord better, and exercise itself towards godliness. Faith receives and heeds the warnings of God as well as His promises. It says here, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...” Faith receives the negative promises of God as well as the positive ones which encourage and strengthen it. John Owen says, “Faith produces various effects in the minds of believers, according to the variety of objects that it is fixed on; sometimes joy and confidence, sometimes fear and reverence.” You can see, can't you what John Owen is saying. Saving faith receives whatever God has for it, in the way of the truth of His Word. It does not matter if it is truth in the past, or the present, or the future. It does not matter if it is of things seen or unseen. It will receive it because it is God's word.

It says here that Noah, having been divinely warned, was “moved with godly fear.” Noah could have been moved by a carnal fear to prepare an ark, simply to save his own life, but that is not what it says. He thought of the majesty and greatness of God. He thought of the holiness and justice of God. He thought deeply about the offended honor of God, in light of all the glory and beauty and goodness of God which had been shown to men. He realized what the wickedness of the people of his generation deserved, was to be destroyed in a judgment of this magnitude. He thought of how easily he could have fallen into the same ensnaring sins, were it not for the grace of God to him. He was convinced by the Spirit of God working in his heart and mind, in this holy form of reasoning, to consider and to believe, that God would indeed destroy the world with a flood, just as he had said. Let me ask you this morning whether you know anything of this godly fear in the way that you look at your obedience to God? Noah was moved by it to act. But

it was his faith in God's word that produced in him this godly fear. A person will never fear in a godly way what he does not truly believe. If we look back at Hebrews 11: 6 we read that, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." But Noah believed also that the converse was true; that God was a punisher of those who do not diligently seek Him, of those who despise and forget Him, days without number. Noah did not say to himself, "God has never done such a thing before, he has never shown His displeasure towards men's sins in such a dramatic way. Surely He will not do so now." No, He reckoned that God is faithful in justice, as well as in the salvation of His people. He believed that if God said it would happen then it would happen! Oh when will we believe that God does tremendous things in justice and judgment, and will do what He threatens to do to unbelievers and wicked men?

Here we see Noah, having this godly fear, prepared an ark. His faith led to godly fear, and his godly fear moved him to action. You can tell whether your faith is a true faith or not by whether you will act upon what has been said by God, even when others around you are not doing so. It is so easy to rationalize away the clear statements of the Word of God in order to have a convenient Christianity, to have an easier life. But true faith does believe in the coming judgment of God. True faith does believe that the wicked will be overthrown and cast down forever. But unbelief does not see these things until it is too late. In Matthew 24: 37-39 it says, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." Noah was a perfect man because by faith he was moved with godly fear to prepare an ark for the saving of his household. Let me ask you if your household, your wife, your children see in you, someone who is building by words and deeds, a Christian life into which they can enter. Does your life preach a gospel of Jesus Christ that they might be saved by? This leads to my last point...

3rdly- Noah was called perfect because he "did according to all that God commanded him."

"Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark and cover it inside and outside with pitch," is the commandment that was given to Noah in verse 14. But not only did Noah obey God in the general instruction to make an ark. We must notice that he went on to obey God's particular instructions as to how it was to be made. Noah built the ark exactly following all the particulars of what the Lord specified for the ark's dimensions, its decks, its door, and its window. God has good reasons for everything that he commands and He expects us to obey the specifics of those commands. A man who would be perfect, will do according to all that God commands. We find this same principle of truth stated for us in the New Testament in the Great Commission where it says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”

The ark itself is a type of Christ. Those who entered in to it were saved from wrath. The building of the ark, we are going to see, is a picture of the building of the New Testament church by faithful workers. The ark was meant to preserve the lives of all those chosen by God in that time period. They would not perish in the flood, because they had followed the Lord’s instructions. If Noah had not followed the Lord’s exact instructions, then all would be lost for them. So it is for us today. Let us close with this lesson. If ministers and people of churches which call themselves Christian do not build with the good materials of sound doctrine from God's word the Bible; if they do not preach to people and to declare to them their sin and need of repentance, then all is lost. If they do not preach Christ’s finished work as the basis of salvation, if they do not preach justification by faith alone, if they do not declare the absolute necessity of the new birth, then they are not building with God, and people will perish. If a church does not preach the necessity of going through the one door which represents Jesus Christ, or the need for light from above to illumine the darkened chambers of our heart, or spiritual food from God’s word to feed the hungry, then people will perish. If they are more concerned with having a big ship, or an impressive ship rather than holding to the pattern set forth in the word of God by the Apostles, then these churches will flounder, and people will perish.

But Noah did exactly as he was commanded and all that he was commanded. And so should we if we would see people saved. If we are faithful to build as God has specified then we will see people truly saved from the wrath of God, and able to bear up under the storms and afflictions of this life. May we all be found like Noah who did according to all that God commanded him.