

Genesis 8

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Noah (Part 3)

“Waiting for .... Something!”

*For those who are with us for the first time today, we have been studying the book of Genesis. Each week we take a section or sections of the book and see if it has anything to say to us, as 21<sup>st</sup> century people.*

Waiting... it's not ever easy. We are told by a teacher to go to the room and wait to collect something. So we go and we wait. And we wait. When will that other person come to meet us? Or we are at the bus stop, even early this day, and the bus is scheduled to arrive at 10:06 and we are waiting. You know never to look at your watch; it only adds to the delay. You hear the maxim: "A watched pot never boils." But soon the bus stop is full and the queue is lengthening to the corner. You have to look; it's 10:14 and you begin to worry that you will be late. Still there is time, but when will that silly bus get here? What could be delaying it?

The repairman is scheduled if we can use the gracious term "scheduled" between 9 and 5 to visit our house and fix the plumbing. But we wait all day and then they ring at 4 and say, they've hit a snag and will have to come another day. Would tomorrow be all right?

That's one frustration you face. Now multiply that by tens and imagine yourself in the waiting room of a hospital, awaiting the imminent arrival of your firstborn child. Or multiply it by hundreds and imagine yourself in a boxcar travelling from Berlin to Auschwitz, and you are awaiting the door's opening after several days of its being shut. The cost of waiting can be dear at times.

Churchill said, "patience is sorrow's salve." Shakespeare said, "He that would have a cake out of the wheat must tarry the grinding." Things take time, you were told as a youth, and now you might even say it to others, but still, time in waiting is frustrating and aching. You long for it to be different; you long for change; you long for something to be adjusted. And it seems that nothing you do or say or even think can change it a whit. And you are right.

## **The potentials of waiting**

First the potentials. Noah believed God and began to build a boat. But before he built the boat, he had built into himself the life of faith. God had given him grace and Noah was living it. As a result, was on the boat he had built. He is with his family. Faith was flowing as the waters were covering the earth. There was potential for new order in the new world under Governor Noah. Potential for new obedience and for proper living. Potential for goodness and kindness to one another. A new kingdom was available in the mind and in the life envisaged by Noah and his family.

Noah trusted God each day. And each day the waves rolled and sometimes they were calm. Each day the weatherman had the same report. For 40 days it rained and for the next 325 days it was fine. He believed the potential of the New World and was consistent in waiting for it. As Solomon later teaches us in Proverbs, "Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts."\_Prov. 8:34

Oswald Chambers said in this week's commentary: "I have to construct with patience the way of thinking that is exactly in accordance with my Lord.... Think of the things that take you out of abiding in Christ, "Yes, Lord, just a minute, I have got this to do; Yes, I will abide when once this is finished." Chambers teaches us that it is the eternal now, the right now that makes such a difference between my life with God and my life without Him. Noah is living in the now of his float, and living in faith. He is patient. Look, there are two ways to wait, wait patiently and wait impatiently. You are going to wait, there's no doubt about that. So Noah chooses to sit and rest and work on the boat in the abiding of the Lord until the days come for him to exit. As surely as God closed the door, Noah believes that God will open it yet again.

Waiting is not doing nothing. Waiting's potentials don't force us to be idle. We work until He gives us the thing we long for. So while Noah waits, he works. "And be like men who are waiting for

their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks." Luke 12:36 The Hebrew word "Avodah" carries this notion.

The word 'avodah' occurs 145 times in the OT. It means 'labour' or 'service'. We have seen the word already in chapter 2 as God instructed man to 'work' in the Garden of Pleasure (.15) The curse on man (chapter 3) was only the pain and hardship accompanying labour, not the labour itself. The Hebrew word for servant is "eved" from the same root and appears 799 times in the OT. *Avad* meaning work or serve appears 290 times. So all up this word shows up in variant forms over 1000 times in the Bible. Not minimal at all. And while the most basic idea of 'eved' is that of a slave, in Israel slavery was no so irksome, since this status involved rights and often positions of trust. Remember a slave would wait on his master. Serving is not about getting what you want, but doing your master's bidding. So Noah, although not called a servant, still waited upon God for years, while building the ark and while preaching to the multitudes. He is waiting on the ark and waiting and waiting. All the while he is serving.

## **The problems of waiting**

There are however, some pitfalls or problems in waiting aren't there? Problems of animals to maintain and situations of interpersonal relationships. This was the consummate Survivor episode. The contest was on and it was a marathon episode at that. We do His bidding, and in Noah's case it meant cleaning up and feeding the animals on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level, feeding his family on the 1<sup>st</sup> level, and hoping that everything from the 3<sup>rd</sup> level stayed down there. Maybe he had to see to the pitch every now and then, making sure that it stayed waterproof, maybe a hammer here or there. Maintenance is not uncommon for a large ship on a year adventure.

Problems of waiting grow as the wait increases. Directly proportional to the expectation, we anxiously accrue more problems. Why doesn't the desired result come? Listen to these words from the

Psalmist, " How long, O LORD? Wilt Thou forget me forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? )(Psalm 13.1-2)

And again

How long, O LORD? Wilt Thou be angry forever? Will Thy jealousy burn like fire? Psa. 79:5

O LORD God of hosts, How long wilt Thou be angry with the prayer of Thy people? Psa. 80:4

Sometimes man is impatient with other men, as in Joshua's comments to Israel

So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? Josh. 18:3

Or in Elijah's commentary on the situation of his day to Israel

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. 1Kings 18:21

But it's not always man who is apparently impatient with God is it? God says these words to humanity:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? Ex. 16:28

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? Num. 14:11

One thing is clear, impatience is different than the deep cry of a man's soul for action from God or from another. Waiting has problems and all the characters in the Divine Drama know it all too well.

Y'shua turned to His followers who could not do a healing and declared, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" Mark 9:19

## God's pleasures in waiting

Finally, today we see God's pleasure in waiting. Noah safely arrives on Ararat a full 5 months after setting out on their journey. Then he waits several more weeks before beginning this odd ceremony of sending out birds. Finally at the end of 365 days, his family and Noah venture out of their box home to establish the New Order. They build an altar and say "This is God's home" and God is well pleased. The aroma satisfied God. Now, before I finish, let me say a couple things about anthropomorphisms. We read in verse one that God remembered Noah. Now here we see God smells things and is gladdened. Don't be confused. God has neither hands nor noses. He is not in human shape. But the Bible uses these terms to help us understand how God identifies with us.

Henry Scougal is the author who influenced both George Whitefield and my oft-quoted John Piper with the phrase "The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love." (Scougal, *The Life of God*, page 62; Piper, *Pleasures of God*, page 18) Piper wraps all his thoughts around that pole. It is exactly because God takes delight in us, the object of His love that we can be saved and filled with His life. It is because we take delight in Him, the object of our love, that we can please Him (Col. 1) in any aspect. Here we see Noah's faith, (Heb 11.) as a pleasure to God and his altar sacrifice as pleasing Him yet further.

Some comments about the birds. The dove and the raven. A raven is unclean and a dove is clean. The raven did not return; the dove returned. The rabbis make a big point about unclean not being

useful to the creation of the New World; the clean are useful. Just as the salvation of Mankind was achieved not by the Cainite builders and inventors, but by the righteous Noah. Of course they follow through with the salvation of Israel not by means of the Baryonim (Gittin 56A) but through Yochanan ben Zakkai, and the return to the Land of Israel will be accomplished not by the deeds of the atheists but by righteous people.

We've been using the phrase of St Augustine, "The City of God" over against the City of Man to compare and contrast these two entities.

Read what it says in verse 9. "but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot" Isn't that a bit redundant? If there is no resting place, then there is no resting place for the foot or the sole of her foot (as if doves have soles on their feet). But remember anywhere else the expression "sole of your foot" is used? Deut. 28.65 is part of the Tochacha, the warning section of Moses. He says, "Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life."

The Bible uses the story of the dove as a picture, an allegory if you will, of the people of Israel (often compared to a dove [Song of Solomon 2.14, 5.2, 6.9]). The dove finds no resting place in the exile, and our only hope of finding peace and fulfillment is to find it in God and in relationship with God's people.

Mark Twain is quoted as saying, "It does sometimes seem a shame that Noah and his party did not miss the boat." His tongue was aimed at the heart of inhumanity. But I'm glad and I hope that you are too after considering now for the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in a row (out of 4) the riches of the person named Noah

in the Bible. His life and work for God are models for me, to a life of faith and a journey that never ends.

**Summary:**

Paul Cohen sent this out in email this week. Thought you might enjoy this as we conclude.

**Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah's Ark.**

One: Don't miss the boat.

Two: Remember that we are all in the same boat.

Three: Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

Four: Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.

Five: Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.

Six: Build your future on high ground.

Seven: For safety's sake, travel in pairs.

Eight: Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

Nine: When you're stressed, float a while.

Ten: Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

Eleven: No matter the storm, when you are with God there's always a rainbow waiting.

Brothers and sisters, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God and give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into