

## Feeling Forgotten? – God of Remembrance – Genesis 8:1

### Scripture Reading: Genesis 8:1-5

#### Introduction

I doubt there are any of us who hasn't been forgotten at some point in their lives

I know I have forgotten to pick people up when I said I would and I've forgotten birthdays and anniversaries

By the way, I have a tip for all of you husbands: If you want to be certain to always remember your wife's birthday; just forget it one time – I guarantee you'll remember it every year after that

Of course, I jest but I did actually forget Kathy's birthday some years ago until I first wrote the date on something while sitting at my desk at work

I had gotten up, had breakfast, gotten ready for work, and said goodbye and never even wished her a happy birthday

She just laughed when I called her – which I did immediately upon realizing my forgetfulness – and said she wondered how long it would be before it dawned on me and she didn't hold it against me

The reality is, as much as we try not to, we all forget others and we have all been forgotten – that's just part of being human

#### **But have you ever felt forgotten by God?**

If so, you're in good company because even King David felt that God had forgotten him when he penned **Psalm 13:1** –

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*

It's entirely possible that any one of us could, regardless of our spiritual maturity, reach such a low emotional point that we might well feel that even God has forgotten us

I know I have personally experienced times when my prayers seemed to bounce off the ceiling, times when God's Word seemed dry and uninspiring, and times when circumstances gave every indication that God had forgotten all about me

Perhaps you could testify to the same experiences

#### **Imagine Noah bobbing around on the waves within the ark; what do you think he was thinking?**

I want you to consider that Noah had boarded the ark at God's command and God had shut the door behind him and he, along with his extended family and all the animals, sat and waited for 7 days

Then the flood came and lifted the ark upon its shoulders and when we come to Genesis 8:1 Noah has been riding the waves for 5 months

And we have no indication that God has communicated with Noah during his time on the ark

In fact, it seems that the next time Scripture records God speaking to Noah was when he told him to leave the ark and doesn't happen for another 7 months after Genesis 8:1 making it more than a year between the two communications

Would it surprise you if you were to learn that Noah at times wondered if God had forgotten all about him?

I think we would all nod in understanding and maybe even excuse Noah if we found out he was looking for some sign that God hadn't forgotten him

Then we come to Genesis 8:1 which begins [**Genesis 8:1a**]-

*But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark.*

Our outline this morning has two main points and each of those main points has two sub-points

And when the Bible says that God remembered Noah we have to understand what it means to say that God "remembers"

So we are going to look first at how God demonstrated his remembrance

## **I. How God Demonstrated His Remembrance**

Before we get to the two ways God remembered Noah we have to be sure we understand that Genesis 8:1 isn't suggesting that God did or even could have actually forgotten Noah

It's comically absurd to picture God in his heaven hitting himself upside his head and saying, "Noah! I forgot all about Noah! I'd better check in on him and see if he's still on that boat."

So the word "remembered" when used in conjunction with God doesn't mean that God recalled something that he had forgotten

Rather, when the Bible says that God remembered someone or something it means God took action to fulfill what he had promised to do

Let's look at a few other examples and that idea should become clear

In **Leviticus 26:45** we read God saying –

*But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."*

God is here saying that he was going to honor the terms of the covenant he had previously made

Then in **Judges 16:28** we see Samson call upon God to remember him so as to strengthen him for one last act of vengeance against the Philistines

Then in **Nehemiah 5:19** we see Nehemiah ask God –

*Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.*

Clearly, Nehemiah is asking God to reward him for what he has done not that God would simply have it in mind

And for a negative example we can look to **Hebrews 10:17** where God says –

*"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."*

Again, it should be obvious that our all-knowing God isn't going to have the memory of our sins erased but that he will not remember them so as to punish us for them

So when we read in Genesis 8:1 that God "remembered" Noah we should immediately look to see what God did that demonstrated that remembrance

### **A. Protection and Provision**

The first thing I want to mention is that God gave protection to Noah and provided all he needed

Even though God appears to have been completely silent during the past 5 months, Noah and his family had been saved from God's judgement and they were safely ensconced on the ark and not trying to tread water for a year

The storm and the surging waters God brought to bear were still out there surrounding the ark but the people and animals inside were safe

Likewise, we look around ourselves and we can't help but feel threatened

I don't know what the future might hold for God's people in the U.S. but I do know that things feel more ominous today than they ever have in our lifetime

But I also know that how we feel isn't what saves us

If you are trusting in nothing but the shed blood of Jesus Christ on your behalf to reconcile you to God and to save you; you are saved from God's judgment no matter how you feel

So the next time you begin to feel like maybe God has forgotten you, I want you to pause long enough to consider your salvation and remember that God has promised to ferry you safely into his presence forever

There is a second thing God has given us to protect us as we travel through this life and it's kind of like Noah's ark  
 God has given us the church and we have the privilege of traveling through this life in the community of God's people  
 I think we often fail to hear God speaking to us and we begin to believe he has forgotten us because we forget that God often speaks and works through his people

**Hebrews 10:24-25** tells us of the mutual encouragement that is found in the church

**Colossians 3:16** tells us of the safety net of accountability that exists within the church

And **1 John 3:16-18** tells us the church is a place of mutual nurture and support

We could go on and look at all the many benefits of being a part of a local body of believers but suffice it to say that the local church is meant to be a place of safety from the world outside and it's God's means of working today

I believe that remaining close to and connected with your spiritual brothers and sisters and being involved in the ministry of the church is one of the best preventatives to "distant God syndrome"

In addition to protection and provision, God also made a promise to Noah

## **B. Promise**

I believe I may have told you about my kindergarten teacher before but this story is just too perfect not to share here  
 On the first day of kindergarten, one of the kids threw a truck and before he could react, Miss Fletcher swooped down on him like the wrath of God and, grabbing him by the arm she began to paddle him with a wooden ruler

I can tell you that all thoughts of throwing toys were dispelled that day and we all listened carefully to Miss Fletcher from then on to make certain we didn't become the next recipient of her wrath

I can easily imagine Noah having similar feelings of apprehension even as the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat and God ultimately told him it was okay to disembark from it

I mean, God had just wiped out the entire population of the earth except for Noah and his family so I could understand if he was wondering if they might not be next if they stepped out of line

But jumping down to verse 21 [Genesis 8:21] we see God promised Noah that he would never again curse the ground or strike down every living creature as he had just done

And God made this promise in spite of the fact that he knew full well that mankind would continue to sin because the flood didn't fix what was wrong with mankind

Then God gave Noah a sign in verse 22 [**Genesis 8:22**] when he promised that from now on, as long as the earth remains, there would be seasons that would continue unabated

So when we see the march of the seasons and the times of planting and harvest we should be mindful of God's promise to preserve us

I don't know about you but I'm really glad that my escaping God's judgment doesn't depend on my faithfulness to God but on his faithfulness to his promise

I know my record has not been without a blemish and I'm really glad that I don't have to depend on my own efforts to earn God's favor

Several years ago, I was at a church service where the pastor brought his very young daughter up onto the platform and demonstrated a game they liked to play

He would have her hold onto his index fingers and he would pick her up and swing her out and back

Now she thought she was hanging onto him, and she was, but her safety and security didn't depend on her grip on his fingers because he also had his other three fingers and thumb of each hand securely gripping her wrists

It was his grip that kept her safe as she swung no matter what she thought and she could have let go completely and still been okay

God promised Noah that he would preserve mankind and he has promised to perfect us and keep us until the end [**Philippians 1:6**] and the constant march of the seasons reminds us of that fact

It naturally follows that, since God in faithfulness remembers us, that he is worthy of our honor

So, I want us to next consider how Noah honored God and how that presents a pattern for us to follow

## **II. How Noah Honored God**

I am placing Noah's honoring of God under two major headings, obedience and observation

Let's look at obedience first

### **A. Obedience**

First, we need to consider the trust Noah exhibited in believing what God told him so that he built the ark, gathered the animals, and got on board just as God told him

**Hebrews 11:7** tells us that Noah operated by faith in doing everything God told him in spite of the fact that there had never been a catastrophic global flood in the past

Whether it had ever rained prior to the flood is an open question that the Bible doesn't answer with any certainty but we can rightly say that there had never been a flood of such proportions

And yet Noah put his complete trust in what God told him and set about building a massive vessel on which to float on the floodwaters to safety as we see in **Genesis 6:22** – and that's a great definition of exhibiting saving faith

We don't know what the reaction was of those who saw Noah building the ark

It was a huge undertaking that took many years, estimates are that it may have taken somewhere between 55 and 75 years, and it seems plausible that people thought Noah was a fool although Scripture doesn't tell us so

What Scripture does tell us is that people who are perishing view God's plan of ultimate salvation as foolishness

The apostle Paul says that very explicitly in **1Corinthians 1:18**

But just as Noah had to trust God completely in spite of how things appeared and put his faith in an ark fashioned from gopher wood, each person must also trust God and put complete trust in the "ark" of Jesus Christ if they are to be saved

Unfortunately, people today are in all ways like the people of Noah's day

**Genesis 6:5** tells us –

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

And that sounds like an honest assessment of society in general today

Sadly, Luke records Jesus saying that the events at his second coming will also be just like it was in Noah's day with most people "missing the boat" so to speak as they refuse to accept his offer of salvation [**Luke 17:26-27**]

*Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

The first way to honor God is to turn from one's sin and efforts of self-salvation and trust him completely – Noah wasn't taking swimming lessons as he was building the ark he trusted God and acted in obedience to what God said

Noah also exhibited a great deal of patience as he waited on God's timing

Look with me at Genesis 8 again and notice that after 150 days in the floating zoo the waters began to subside and the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat

The water continued to subside until on the first day of the tenth month the mountaintops were visible and then we have the account of Noah sending out the raven and doves

Then jumping down to verse 13 [**Genesis 8:13**] we read –

*In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.*

Looking back to **Genesis 7:11** we see that the flood began –

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month*

So when Noah saw that the ground was dry it had been just shy of a year that he had been closed up in the ark

Now, I don't know about you, but I would have been itching to get off of that ark and when I saw the ground was dry cabin fever might have gotten the better of me and I would have bolted for terra firma

But not Noah, he waited patiently to hear from God

Notice in verse 14 [**Genesis 8:14**] that it was another 56 days before God told Noah it was finally time to leave the ark and set the animals loose

And the total time between Genesis 8:5 when the ark ran aground and Genesis 8:14 was an additional 220 days which was about 1-1/2 times as long as the ark was afloat

Remember, this is the first time it is recorded that God spoke to Noah since he told him to enter the ark so it's been over a year between commands and yet Noah was faithful to be obedient to the last word he had from the Lord

Being obedient and patiently waiting is probably one of the toughest things for us to do

It's especially difficult for us today as we've become used to things happening instantly – or virtually instantly anyway

And we have the tendency to want everything to happen right now

But it hasn't really ever been all that different as we see Abraham have difficulty waiting on God's timing which led him to look to Sarah's servant, Hagar, to produce an heir

Still, obedience to God during the silent times is crucial because God often chooses to mold us by making us wait and waiting patiently on the Lord is sometimes the only way to learn the lessons God has for us and to receive his best for us

According to God's perfect timing Noah left the ark and set the animals free but what he did next is rather remarkable as he took time to observe or take notice of God

## **B. Observation**

Look with me at verse 20 [**Genesis 8:20**] –

*Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

God in his infinite wisdom had commanded Noah to bring seven pairs of each kind of clean animals so that there would be enough animals for the sacrifice without dooming the clean animals to extinction

And it seems according to the text that the first thing Noah did when his feet hit dry ground for the first time in over a year was to build an altar and make a sacrifice to God

We have the tendency to read an account like this and pass it off with an "Of course that's what a Bible character would do" but we forget that Noah was a man just like us and he had lots of pressing things to attend to just like we do

But the first thing Noah did was express his sincere thanks to God for his salvation

He didn't build a home for himself or pens for his domestic animals – he built an altar and made a sacrifice

One of the most egregious failings of believers in modern times is that we allow the busy-ness of our lives to keep us from acknowledging God in worship far too often

Granted, we have a lot of pressing matters to attend to and a lot of demands on our time but it's far too easy to get so busy that we actually forget God

Forgetting what God has done and is doing for us leads us ever further away from God and, while we tend to notice when we think God has forgotten us, we fail to see that it is we who have forgotten God and moved away from him

The ready remedy for the ingratitude of forgetting is to regularly set apart time to remember God and his great salvation he has graciously provided for us

Do you want to feel close to God and know that he has not forgotten you?

Then make remembering him in worship the foremost priority of your life and don't allow anything to crowd it out

## Conclusion

I would venture to say that many if not all of us have felt that maybe God had forgotten us at one time or another

When the nation of Israel thought that God had forsaken and forgotten them God answered through the prophet Isaiah [Isaiah 49:15]

*Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*

And in **Hebrews 13:5** we see the promise God made to Joshua extended to us – *I will never leave you nor forsake you*

But God does sometimes get quiet just as he apparently didn't speak to Noah for over a year

And in those times we have the opportunity to demonstrate our trust in God by our obedience as we continue to remember him by remaining in his Word and continuing to worship him

As soon as Noah obeyed God and went into the ark he was safe and God was faithful to carry him over the floodwaters

God was always working on behalf of Noah to protect him even as he was silent

And God will do the same for all of his children so if you have trusted Christ you have nothing at all to worry about

Isaiah 42:6 is a beautiful verse that speaks directly about God the Father's relationship to his Son and it contains three promises that are meant for the Son that by extension belong to us as well

[Isaiah 42:6a] *I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you*

Since God has also called us we can be confident that he will take us by the hand and keep us until the end

Remember that the next time you feel that God has forgotten you and praise him for his faithfulness

Let's pray