

WAIT TILL YOUR FATHER GETS YOU HOME

GENESIS 8:1-22 SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Tom Petty said, “The waiting is the hardest part.” Tom’s not alone. Since the fall of man all of creation has been groaning, waiting for deliverance.¹ The Psalms and prophets cry out, “How long, oh Lord?”² We feel the strain of waiting for ultimate deliverance and, often, for *immediate* deliverance from our trials and sufferings or simply delays in life.

But, life is full of waiting. And so the Lord tells us, “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.”³ A great example of that is given in our text tonight. Genesis 8 is *full* of waiting. It shows day after day, week after week, month after month, of staying put and waiting to leave the ark. I get antsy when my Amazon package doesn’t come same-day!

As we go through these verses, try to imagine Noah going to the log book each morning and scratching down another line on the tally. There would be about 377 of them before the end.⁴ Though Noah’s family knew God would bring them out, they had no exit date. Only their Heavenly Father knew the day and the hour when they would be delivered out of the ark into their new land.

We’ll see that some of their waiting took place while they looked out on dry land. Imagine how difficult that would’ve been. But, these faithful 8 had begun this adventure in submission to God and they were going to finish it out the same way.

Genesis 8:1-3 - God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside. ²The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped. ³The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the water had decreased significantly.

When God “remembers” in the Bible, it means He initiates a miraculous, saving act on behalf of His people.⁵ It’s not that He was so occupied with other things that they slipped His mind. One of the most astonishing revelations about God is that He, in His all-powerful omniscience, is thinking of *you* continually. We cannot fathom a mind that can accomplish such a feat, and yet it’s true.

Psalm 139:17-18a - ¹⁷God, how precious your thoughts are to me; how vast their sum is! ¹⁸If I counted them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

God is thinking about you right now! His thoughts and actions are specially concerned with human beings. Yes, God has compassion for the animals on the ark, but it was the *people* thought of most.

¹ Romans 8:22

² Psalm 13:1, Psalm 79:5, Psalm 89:46, Habakkuk 1:2

³ Psalm 27:14

⁴ *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (other sources place the time at slightly fewer days)

⁵ *CSB Study Bible Notes*

I'm sure as the days rolled by there were times when Noah thought, "Has God forgotten us? Are we ever coming out?" But then one day something new happened: *A wind started to blow.*

Why didn't God just snap His fingers and make the water disappear? It always seems like it would be more efficient for God to act more like a Genie. Yet, He used a slow process to dry out the earth.

It is a Biblical principle that waiting, in faith, produces strength in our lives. Isaiah 40 says, "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." The prophet goes on to say that God "acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him."⁶ And so, Noah waited.

Genesis 8:4 - ⁴The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

We don't know exactly where Noah's ark landed. Some say Turkey, some say Armenia. There have been *many* expeditions and supposed sightings. There's a lot of tradition involved. I learned this week that since 1992 the Armenian Coat of Arms bears an image of the ark on top of a mountain. There *is* something that's known as the "Ararat Anomaly," which was first photographed in 1949.⁷ It appears to be something, encased in the snowcap of the mountain, that is roughly boat shaped.

It's possible that the Ark will be discovered in the last days.⁸ But we shouldn't count on it for a few reasons. First, the boat was made of wood. Yes, it was pitched inside and out, which would've helped to preserve it, but aside from the wear and tear of water, wind, and ice, Ararat is a volcano. It last erupted in 1840. Lava beats wood every time. Secondly, we're going to see that the ark was somewhat disassembleable. Perhaps Noah took the ark apart to build a home for his family.

Don't be so distracted by the *where* that you miss the *when* of its landing: The seventeenth day of the seventh month. The late Ray Stedman points out this remarkable fact:⁹ Under Moses, God told Israel that He was changing the calendar. The seventh month became the first month. The Passover would be held on the 14th day of that month.¹⁰ That was the day Christ was crucified. 3 days later He rose again. Which, on Noah's calendar, would've been the 17th day of the 7th month.

For thousands of years God has been promising and proving His plan of salvation cannot fail. He's been showing again and again that He will keep up His end - that if we take refuge in Christ, He *will* deliver us safely to the eternal shore. The resurrection is the mountain we can rest our lives upon.

Genesis 8:5 - ⁵The water continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible.

⁶ Isaiah 64:4

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ararat_anomaly

⁸ A belief held by Chuck Missler <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5UBqI88GPM>

⁹ <https://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/genesis/the-new-beginning>

¹⁰ Leviticus 23:5

After 150 days of bobbing around, the ark was now stuck in a fixed place. They haven't heard any messages from the Lord, so they wait two and a half months, watching peaks slowly rise into view.

Genesis 8:6 - ⁶After forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made,

What might they see out this window? A lot of water and (probably) a lot of death. The floating carcasses of men and animals would be a grim proof of what sin does to a life and to our world.¹¹

Genesis 8:7-9 - ⁷and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth's surface had gone down, ⁹but the dove found no resting place for its foot. It returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface of the whole earth. He reached out and brought it into the ark to himself.

Throughout the flood narrative, the Lord makes a distinction between clean and unclean animals. Now we are witness to this interesting experiment where Noah sends out one clean bird - a dove - and one unclean bird - a raven - hoping to glean some information about the state of the world beyond what his eyes can see.

Bible teachers like Spurgeon and Stedman highlight the devotional treasures in Noah's birdwatching. You're a Christian, safe in Christ, knowing God will see you through. Meanwhile, you've got to interact with the world. The Bible explains that, as you do so, you've got two mutually exclusive natures: The sanctified, spiritual nature (represented by the dove) and the old, sinful nature (represented by the raven). You can put either of these natures into operation.

The raven shows us that the flesh is content to be *apart* from Christ. It will fly about and rest on anything it can, no matter how unstable or rotten it is. A raven will eat carrion (dead flesh),¹² even when proper, nutritious food is available in the ark. So, too, our old, sinful nature, is content to fill itself with the death and garbage floating by.

But then we have the spiritual nature - the Spirit of life in Christ by which we have been set free. This nature is clean and righteous, represented by the dove. It goes out and interacts with the world but always returns to find sustenance and shelter in the ark, which (in this parable) represents Christ. It does not rest on any floating carcass, but keeps to its proper abode in the Lord until He finally brings it out into the New Creation.

Genesis 8:10-12 - ¹⁰So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again. ¹¹When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth's surface had gone down. ¹²After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but it did not return to him again.

¹¹ <https://medium.com/blue-skies-happy-clouds/does-a-dead-body-sink-or-float-6b2d5e3d74f5>

¹² <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/common-raven>

Notice again the waiting, week after week. It would've demanded immense patience and peace.

Some have scoffed at the idea of the dove finding an olive leaf after a global flood. How could a tree have survived and grown in such a way in such a short time? In actuality, Theophrastus (who is considered the father of botany) records in his *Enquiry Into Plants* that olive trees can leaf while submerged in water.¹³ Pliny the Elder reported the same.¹⁴

The results of Noah's experiment would've suggested that it's time to leave the ark. After all, the dove was gone. The trees were above water. So, it must be time to go, right? Apparently Noah didn't think so.

Genesis 8:13-14 - ¹³In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the ark's cover and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

We see that Noah could, at least partially, dismantle the ark. He removes the cover. And what does he see? It's over! The earth is dry. So, what happens? He *still* waits from new year till February 27th! What is he waiting for? The land is *dry*! If we were at the family meeting, we'd say it's time to go.

Our earthly circumstances cannot be the compass of our life's journey. Noah stayed put. Why? Because he loved the ark? No. Because he was *afraid* to go out? No. It was because he hadn't been *told* to go out. It was by God's word he had gone *into* the ark and he was going to stay until directed otherwise. But the bird! The leaf! The dry ground! Ok, but what does the *Lord* say? Of course, they would've *wanted* to leave the ark. But *this* is what it means to wait on the Lord.

Genesis 8:15-19 - ¹⁵Then God spoke to Noah, ¹⁶"Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out all the living creatures that are with you—birds, livestock, those that crawl on the earth—and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, came out. ¹⁹All the animals, all the creatures that crawl, and all the flying creatures—everything that moves on the earth—came out of the ark by their families.

My question is: Lord, why did you drop us on a mountain? Imagine the *difficulty* in relocating everyone down thousands of feet of elevation. I remember years ago moving our piano out of our house which was a raised foundation, about 3 steps, and we all almost died.

The life of a servant of God can be very demanding. There can be a lot of uphill effort and downward drag. But when we serve in the power of the Spirit we discover that God's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

¹³ Theophrastus *Hist. Plant.* 4, 7

¹⁴ Pliny *The Natural History* 13, 50

Genesis 8:20 - ²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

If you had survived the end of the world and spent more than a year on the ark, what's the first thing you would do when you got out?

Paul McCartney sang,

*If I ever get out of here
Thought of giving it all away
To a registered charity
All I need is a pint a day¹⁵*

Ironically, Noah's going to head that way in chapter 9. But on *this* day, the first thing he did was build an altar and hold a worship service.

I usually think of it as a lamb or two, but notice what it says: Some of *every* kind of clean animal and bird. This was a large, costly offering. Having looked out the window all those weeks, Noah would've reflected on the fact that his sin deserved judgment just like everyone else's. He wasn't sinless, just a recipient of the grace of God. As James Montgomery Boice points out, Noah still comes to God as a sinner and he renews his love and commitment to God in this act of worship.

Genesis 8:21 - ²¹ When the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, he said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth onward. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

The sad reality is that the flood might have wiped the earth's surface clean, but it didn't change the human heart.¹⁶ Sin would continue to spread and bear its fruit, even in the lives of God's people. Despite the persistence of sin, God would *still* be gracious. More gracious than we deserve. Here He makes a promise, not dependent on us, thankfully, but dependent on Him.

The other lovely thing about this verse is how God is pictured enjoying the aroma of the sacrifice. So often I think of God hearing us or seeing us. Those are things we can do from far away. But *smelling* requires nearness. God the Father, of course, is Spirit, but here He paints Himself as being close enough to breathe in the perfume of Noah's offering. And it wasn't the meat God loved to smell, but the hearts of His children, offering true and valuable praise to Him.¹⁷

God is constantly describing Himself as near to us and drawing us ever closer. He shows Himself inhabiting our praises and living in our hearts and speaking softly to us and holding us in His

¹⁵ Paul McCartney *Band On The Run*

¹⁶ *CSB Study Bible Notes*

¹⁷ Psalm 51:16-17

hands. *That* should be our mindset as we worship. That we consider God's love for us and consider what He has done to save us from the wretchedness of our sin and how great He is. If we do that, how could our worship be lifeless or mechanical? How could we be satisfied with giving Him the bare minimum? No, realizing these truths about God will invigorate our worship and offerings to the Lord to be full of sweet-smelling savor.

Genesis 8:22 - ²²As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease."

So the adventure closes with a poem promising God's faithful perpetuation of creation. The flood was over, but now Noah would begin a *new* phase of waiting. He still had 300 years of life to live. He'd have to wait for trees to grow, crops to come in, herds to calve and grandchildren to be born. There would be a lot of waiting as he continued his walk with God.

The same is true for us. As we wait, we can choose to wait on the Lord and be of good courage. We can remember that, in the waiting, God is with us and wants to show us things and speak His Word to us and use us to further His plans. He wants to build us up, often *through* waiting and, as He does so, we can work with Him, worship Him, walk with Him until the Lord brings us out of this life and into the New Creation He's saved us for. Those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land.¹⁸

¹⁸ Psalm 37:9 (ESV)