Grace Like a Flood - Part Three

# By Faith

## (Genesis 6:17-18)

Today as we continue in part three of our series Grace Like a Flood, I want to talk to you about the importance of embracing your God-given uniqueness because God created you with a purpose. And so, just as he saved Noah and his family out of all the people in the world, God has a specific assignment for each one of us.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

And so, we were created with intentionality and purpose and God did not put all of that uniqueness in you so that you would blend into a drowning culture.

Now, I know that can be confusing with all of the different mixed-up messages in the world today, but God created you for a purpose. In other words, there is something he planned in advance for you to do. God had you in mind and the Bible says he made us, “male and female” (Matthew 19:4). And so, there was intentionality in your identity down to the minute details of your fingerprints and your DNA. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, woven together in the secret place, and so who you are is not up to debate or public opinion because we are God’s workmanship.

I remember as a young boy growing up, watching my father shaving in the mirror. We were talking as he was looking intently in the mirror, focused on the task, and from time to time he would glance at me in the mirror. And so, we were having this conversation, I was watching him in the mirror, and he would look at me in the mirror, and we were talking to the reflection or the image in the mirror.

Now, I didn’t think about it at the time, but now many years later I recognize the deep spiritual implications of that moment. Even as a young boy I was learning lessons of theology in everyday life. The apostle Paul said it this way,

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

As my father and I were having this conversation in the mirror, there was a spiritual lesson that took me half of my lifetime to learn. In fact, that’s why I brought up the story, because my hope is that this message will change the way you see yourself in a mirror. You see, a mirror will teach you about the purpose of God, because the Bible says,

“We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

In other words, when God formed man, creating him in the secret place, and breathed life into him, he created him for the purpose of reflecting his glory.

And so, when he said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,” he was creating us to be a mirror, a reflection of himself, because it was “in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26-27). And so, from the beginning of time what he always wanted for humanity was that we would reflect his glory. When he looked at the first man and the first woman, he saw himself and he said that it was good.

Now, over the past two weeks we have been talking about Noah and the flood, we’ve talked about the Nephilim, and the corruption that was in the world. We saw how God was grieved to see this perversion of what he had first created in his image and likeness, and how the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands. Jeremiah tells us, the potter determined to form it into another pot, shaping it as it seemed best to him (Jeremiah 18:2-3). Because the world was in rebellion to the intents and purposes of God.

In other words, Satan was doing everything he could do to disrupt and distort the reflection in the mirror because he hated God, and he hated man because he looked like his Father. And so, in the beginning there was this intimacy, this fellowship, and many years ago as I was looking at my father in the mirror, I was looking at who I would become. The man I saw in the mirror represented my future and so as I gazed in the mirror I was looking at who I would become.

What happened in Genesis chapter 6 was that God the father looked at Noah and saw himself, he saw his likeness and his image, but when he looked at the other people around him, the reflection was disrupted because the mirror was fractured by sin. In other words, the image was distorted, and so when God saw how great man’s wickedness had become, he was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” (Genesis 6:6).

When he saw that which he had created in his image and in his likeness was no longer reflecting his holiness, according to his preordained purpose, he warned Noah saying,

“I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it” (Genesis 6:17).

Everything on earth will perish, because it was a distortion or caricature of what he had first created.

But then on the other hand, as God looked to Noah, he saw a reflection of his image and likeness. He saw his glory wrapped up in humanity and Noah found favor with God because he had not become confused about his identity or his purpose. And so, he said to Noah,

“I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you” (Genesis 6:18).

Noah found favor with God because he understood his purpose, he walked with God, and he knew that he had been created in the image of God and was intended to reflect him on earth.

And so, what I’m trying to communicate to you today is what God said, that you are those who are called by my name,

“Whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (Isaiah 43:7).

In other words, you were created to be a living, breathing, expression of the image of God. Created to bring glory to his name, speaking like he would speak, and acting like he would act in righteousness. Therefore, your purpose is to reflect him in your home, in your community, and in your workplace, recognizing that you are a type of the tabernacle, a form of the tent of meeting where God came down to me with his people.

And so, if you are born again, you are the image of God, the breath of God in human flesh, and the Bible says,

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

And so, your purpose is to be a reflection of his glory on earth because you are a personification of divinity. It is Christ in you and so whatever you do, glory should come out of your praise, your talk, and your walk, because you are doing it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). And when you get that right, understanding your purpose, reflecting his glory, it doesn’t matter how high the floodwaters get because no weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isaiah 54:17).

God will protect you; he will never leave you nor forsake you, and he said,

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you…” (Isaiah 43:2).

And that’s a good place to praise him, that’s a good place for an amen, because he promises his presence. No matter what you’re walking through, it will not sweep over you, you will overcome it because there is someone greater in you. Jesus said, “If anyone hears my voice,” whenever and wherever you open the door, he says “I will come in” (Revelation 3:20). And so, you don’t even have to be here in this building, you can be watching online, but wherever you open the door, the blessing of God’s presence will come in.

He said, “I will be with you” and we know that because the Lord inhabits the praises of his people. And so, whenever the praise goes up, the glory comes out, rivers of living water. Jesus said,

“Whoever believes in me… streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38).

And so, greater is he who is in you, glory is emanating from you, like streams of living water flowing over your tongue. It’s the very essence of the living God radiating from you, because God has made you a mirror, you are a reflection of his glory.

That’s all God ever wanted from humanity, that we would mirror his image, that we would reflect his glory. And so, just like my conversation with my father in the mirror, talking to the image in the mirror, Jesus said,

"This, then, is how you should pray… your kingdom come, your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10).

It’s just a reflection, a mirror image, and he wants you to be a reflection of heaven. And so, when God wanted to be glorified on earth, he created an image, a likeness of himself in man.

As he walked in the garden with Adam, they talked with each other, just like looking at yourself in the mirror. Adam beheld the glory of God as they were walking through the garden, without the shame of guilt or the fear of death, and as they were conversing, he was…

“Being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

But as time progressed and sin increased in the world God looked for that which he had created, but what he saw on earth did not look like himself. In fact, it was a caricature birthed out of the pleasures of the sons of God and the daughters of men, a mutation that was growing, increasing, and wreaking havoc on earth. What he saw was a distortion of his original intent, what he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands, and so he said,

“I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish” (Genesis 6:17).

Everything on earth will perish, because you just can’t reach everybody, you can’t help people who loved darkness instead of light. And that’s why you’ve got to trust God when he drowns certain things, opportunities, and people out of your life, because there are those who refuse to come to the light because their deeds are evil. And so, it’s their decision, their choice, and God says I’m going to drown everything that does not reflect my glory.

Now, the theme of salvation has always been faith, that has always been God’s way, it has never been any different from that. Because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. And so, this is not new, this is old, just as the prophet Habakkuk said,

“The righteous will live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

But here in Genesis chapter 6, the Lord God saw how great man’s wickedness had become and the earth was corrupt in his sight.

In ages past he had seen the faith of Abel and the Bible says by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead (Hebrews 11:4). The Lord saw the faith of Enoch and he was commended as one who pleased God. He was taken from this life so that he did not experience death. But then the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 11, verse seven,

“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family” (Hebrews 11:7).

Now, this is an interesting text because in it we discover that Noah’s faith was proven to be genuine by his fear. Not like Abel who offered God a better sacrifice than Cain. Not like Enoch who walked with God for 300 years. But Noah, who when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. In other words, Noah believed the warning God had given him and it produced in him the fear that it should have.

You see, fear is a natural, powerful, emotion, given to us by God because it serves an important role in keeping us safe. Fear empowers us to cope with potential danger, releasing adrenaline in your body, and giving you the strength and ability to function in dangerous and difficult situations. And so, when God said,

“I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it.” (Genesis 6:17).

Noah in holy fear built an ark to save his family because he believed the warning God had given him. He believed that everything on earth would perish in the flood. And so, it was his holy fear that caused him to move, but first it was his faith that caused him to believe when God warned him about things not yet seen.

Now, this is interesting because it wasn’t too long ago that many Christians argued about whether to wear a mask or not to wear a mask, to have church or not to have church, saying that if you really had faith, you would not have fear. Almost as if faith and fear were opposites like top and bottom or East and West, but the truth is that they are not opposites. The opposite of faith is really unbelief, it’s a feeling of self-sufficiency, thinking that you don’t need God, and the result of that unbelief is disobedience.

That is what caused God to bring floodwaters upon the earth, and Noah’s faith and fear were hand-in-hand, because his faith caused him to believe God when he was warned about things not yet seen. And that same faith created an urgency in him to build an ark in holy fear. You see, Noah didn’t even know what rain was, he couldn’t even imagine what a flood was, because at this point in history there had never been any rain. The Bible says that from the dawn of creation,

“Streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground” (Genesis 2:6).

And so, a mist watered the earth, and there was a canopy in the atmosphere around the globe creating this safe sheltered greenhouse environment. And because of that there were no seasons, no ice caps on the North and South Poles, which explains why we have found frozen mastodons in the Arctic Circle with fresh frozen vegetation in their stomachs.

God warned Noah about things not yet seen and he believed, not because of his experience, not because of his knowledge, but because of the word of the Lord. And so, he moved with holy fear, and the Bible says,

“Noah did everything just as God commanded him” (Genesis 6:22).

You see, faith leads to obedience, and unbelief leads to disobedience. And so, God warning you is a grace, Grace Like a Flood, and God warned Noah, not about the wickedness or the corruption, but about that which he had not yet seen. And the Bible says that God gave him plans for the ark and,

“By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Noah’s faith motivated him to move in holy fear, he was driven, he had purpose, and he built something by faith that didn’t even make any sense. Without a cloud in the sky, he tried to explain to his neighbors why he was building a boat in his backyard. He tried to tell them what rain was, trying to warn them from the coming judgment, but they did not believe.

Because of his faith he built the ark and because of his faith he condemned the world. Noah believed and he obeyed God, doing exactly what God told him to do, all the while preaching righteousness as the only way to escape the judgment of God. In the same way, we are called to believe, called to have faith, because Jesus said,

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away” (Matthew 24:37-39).

“That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come” (Matthew 24:39-42).

By faith, Noah, became heir of righteousness and by faith he would save his family, saving everything that reflected God’s glory. And so, God said to Noah,

"Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation” (Genesis 7:1).

Noah is an Old Testament illustration of justification by faith, because he believed God and God accepted his faith and credited it to him as righteousness. He is blameless before God, not a perfect man, but because he believed all that God had revealed, righteousness was credited to his account.

We understand this as a New Testament truth but what we have discovered is that it is really an Old Testament truth. Just like we have been studying the book of Romans on Wednesday nights and in chapter 3 we read,

“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law” (Romans 3:20).

But as Paul said in Philippians chapter 3, that righteousness we need,

“Is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Philippians 3:9).

And so, when you believe all that God has revealed with all of your heart, God will grant you righteousness and cover you with his own righteousness viewing you as blameless. In that moment you will have been brought into the ark of safety, that ark who is Jesus Christ, and you will be delivered from judgment.

That is the good news that he encouraged Timothy to preach. He said, remember your purpose, and remember your power,

“Don’t be ashamed to testify about our Lord… But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life; not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:8-9).

And so, you may be scared to death like Timothy, not knowing what you’re going to do, fearful and trembling, stumbling over your words. You know that God has called you and that he has a purpose for you, your goal is to build something that is going to bring about lasting change, but your neighbors and your antagonists trouble you. But it’s in that context that Paul tells Timothy,

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

And so, like Noah, God wants you to move with holy fear, because faith and fear are friends. Faith and fear are building hand-in-hand, but the ark is faith in the complete revelation of Jesus Christ.

What we have been called to as a church, as followers of Christ, it’s not about you, it’s about the generations that are coming after you. Brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, they’re going to walk into an ark they didn’t build, they’re going to walk in and sit down, because it’s going to be built when they come. The Bible says,

“No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Right now, today, you believe, and your faith is expressed in your fear. The fact that Noah believed God is what scared him. It made him scared of things not yet seen and that’s what made him move. There may be some of you like Timothy who are little bit scared, because they said you didn’t have it in you, you weren’t good enough, you couldn’t do it, and you thought they might be right. But today, your believing God and praying that he would make a liar out of them, because you know that you have purpose and you’re building something of lasting value. Let’s pray.

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