

“Pretty Amazing”
 Pastor Sam Richards
 Sermon for 2 March 2025
 Texts: Genesis 6:5-8

I have questions: Is our human capacity for moral outrage a gift from God only? Or is this moral sense merely a divine attribute? We are outraged at many things: at wasteful spending, child trafficking (there are over 250 victims of the Epstein sex ring alone!), the October 7th massacre in Israel, the Twin Towers 9/11 attack (some 3,500 Americans murdered by Jihadists), and pogroms/genocides wherever and whenever they are perpetrated. But human outrage over these travesties pale in comparison to the towering moral outrage of God over the pervasive wickedness of mankind as recorded in Genesis 6. The Bible is very useful in discerning whose moral outrage is superior: ours, or God’s. ***Should we sit in judgment over God’s willingness to destroy all human wickedness?*** Surely a good, just, mercy and loving God wouldn’t dare offend our sensibilities by such an expression of wrath and judgment. Those who oppose consequences for evil, wickedness and sin (and they are many) find the Flood morally repugnant (even to rejecting what they term as the Old Testament God). They are truth deniers, picking and choosing which portions of Scripture align with their moral sensibility. Still, it is shocking when one hears such views espoused from the pulpit

A second question: What is our Bible? Just a book? Thirdly, what was it before it was a book? The technological development of printing books is pretty amazing—it was/is a game changer. Before it was printed as a book, the Bible was derived from parchments, fragments, papyrus texts, ancient codices. It wasn’t always the finished product we designate to be a book. It was always the inspired record, a transcription of the revelations of God, given of old by many authors over many centuries . . . it was Scripture when it was written on scrolls, stored in clay jars, or, perhaps having been engraved on stone **by the finger of God** long before it ever was a codex, or a printed book!. A pretty amazing book.

When I attended church last Sunday, I was stunned by the pulpit dismissiveness I heard regarding the Bible. I listened as I was told that the Bible is of “no use in finding the will of God.” Several scriptures leapt to mind: scriptures which began with words such as, **And this is the will of God for you. So who am I to believe, the Apostle Paul, or this preacher** who has issues with the specific utility of the Bible?! Then he set about to prove his point by asserting that the Bible was full of bad actors (Abraham, Moses and David in particular). This greatly exceeded the truism that **we are all sinners!** Furthermore the preacher then specifically questioned the moral authority of God. Could a God who ordained the slaughter of men, women and children be good¹—setting aside their condemnation as utterly depraved? Let alone be the moral arbiter of the entire universe! His moral outrage trumped God’s express condemnation.

To this man’s mind, the God of the Old Testament was different from the God of the New Testament. Really? What if his opening postulate were untrue? ***The Bible is of great use in discerning the will of God***—it contains the standards and it contains express statements of that will—not to mention the Sermon on the Mount (new laws for the redeemed) and the teachings of Jesus which expound God’s will for us!

¹ On this matter of divine goodness, we have the testimony of Genesis whereby each stage of creation is followed by a solemn declaration **and God saw that it was good.** The idea that Creation is an overflow of God’s goodness sets the moral tone of all creation!

How can it be that while rejecting God's purpose to destroy the wicked, we are glad to embrace the truth that God put sin under the ban on the cross, obliterating all of it? The same God who declared in Genesis 6:7-10 his willingness to put the whole of creation under the ban as a judgment on human sin would out of love give sin the same rough treatment—destroying sin entirely on the cross at great cost:

5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved [a]in His heart. 7 The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the [b]sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 9 These are *the records of the generations of Noah*. Noah was a righteous man, [c]blameless in his [d]time; Noah walked with God².

Again, as a result of the wickedness/sin of man God was putting the entire creation under the ban, designating it for utter destruction (by Flood). Those who presume to judge God for allowing genocide, wars and violence might want to recalibrate their moral outrage. They might wish to take stock of God's outrage, his utter hatred of sin. Whose outrage matters most, ours or his? Changing one's assessment of what one has done is different from altering one's character, or essential being—we were created good but we gave up on staying as good as we were created to be. God was/is saddened by that.

Incidentally, what does God value above mere biological life, mere existence? He values, for starters, holiness, purity and goodness . . . then service, worship and love!

I chose this Genesis citation for its broad scope. The entire creation, not just a tribe of morally bankrupt and depraved sinners(!), is subject to divine wrath, and retribution. Are we to presume to sit in judgment over God and accuse him of evil, wickedness, and murder? According to my preacher, ***we are the judges***, and it is unthinkable to some that God should punish the whole of creation for human wickedness. ***How can God be just if there is no consequence for sin, rebellion, wickedness and evil??*** Entirely gone from some of our considerations is ***the moral outrage of a sin-offended God***—that outrage is precisely what entitles God to judge sin, and to prescribe a flood to address sin and transgression. Let consequences be stricken from the record! Is the God who created man is not right to blot out man, to abolish the wicked?

In verse 8 the word "favor," or grace, makes its first appearance in Scripture! The world found condemnation, but *a just, righteous and perfect man*, Noah, ***who walked with God*** (v. 9), he (and eight with him) found grace. They were rewarded with preservation and the wicked were all punished. I must state the obvious: God did both—he *punished wickedness and favored the righteous simultaneously*, in the same action because of who

² Footnotes

- a. Genesis 6:6 Lit to
- b. Genesis 6:7 Lit heavens
- c. Genesis 6:9 Lit complete, perfect, or having integrity
- d. Genesis 6:9 Lit generations

he is as the judge of all creation—*he mercifully destroys the wicked and preserves the righteous*. We mustn't walk past the fact that **all living creatures** shared in the catastrophe of the Flood because they are participant in a moral universe. And that inclusion, too, is a very good thing.

Now the same God who did the preceding, caused the Flood, is **amazingly** the same God, our Father in heaven, who sent **his only beloved Son** into the world to lay down his life in atonement for human sin, all of it! In mercy, in a better catastrophe³, He obliterated sin, **put it under the ban** so to speak—on the cross, and paid for in his blood. And this judgment on sin is widely taken to be the supreme act of our loving God, who is the moral authority, the judge of the entire world. It may appear as a different God, but it reveals not two gods but one. There is only one covenant, Old and New taken together, they have their distinctive(s) but those do not extend to the heretical assertion that there must two different gods. Confusion on this point has produced many heresies over time.

The genocide, or annihilation of whole tribes of pagan, idolatrous and wicked peoples (when their wickedness warranted such destructive judgment!) is, frankly, of a different order than the worldwide destruction such as the Flood recorded about Noah's generation!

Now the sermon I was attending, remember, was on "Knowing the will of God." I would be remiss if I didn't observe that revealed the will of God is this: **we should be righteous, blameless and walk with God just as Noah was!** This is attained by believing on Jesus, by grace through faith. That is the plain will of God for us. It is the clear teaching of Scripture. Read and rejoice! If we are righteous, blameless and walk with God, we shall find favor with God, too, just as did Noah, Abraham, Moses and King David. More on that soon.

When it came to discrediting the Bible—along the lines of disproving its usefulness for finding the will of God—the preacher cited the sinful behaviors of several bible heroes (Abraham, Moses and King David) without addressing 1. If they were performing the will of God in their lives apart from sinning, immorality and ethical failure; and 2. whether they were hearing God speak and following his word, wisdom and direction; and 3. were they each faithful men living lives worthy of emulation. Can we extract anything about the will of God from their whole lives? In a word, yes, we study these men being obedient to their revelation truth while in consultation with Scripture, or in conversation with God. Their obedience teaches us about the will of God.

The will of God in David's life was that he be devoted, **a man after God's own heart**. David's contribution to worship and Scriptural devotional life in the Psalms, and to the realm of proverbial wisdom was impressive. With regard to Abraham, it was that he walk in faithful obedience and instructed his household to **walk in the ways of God**—it was his faith which was **reckoned unto him as righteousness**. While considering the will of God in Moses' life, we should note that he falls midway between Abraham and David. He transcribed the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch [which historically served as the

³ This "better catastrophe" is more familiarly described as a "crisis," a critical turning point in human history." Before this all was hopeless, all in decline but with Jesus' resurrection we obtained a living hope, all was up.

whole canon of Scripture for various sects, and for the Samaritan Jews after the division of Israel in 925 BC under King Jeroboam, David's grandson]. Moses sought counsel with God, was even given **God's words** to speak to Pharaoh. So, if he did what he was told, as *it is recorded he did*, was he not acting on revelation that has been preserved as Scripture? Of course he was. Ask God for the heart of David, the faith of Abraham and the obedient will of Moses. And, then, possessing these things, it will be easier for you to discern what the will of God is in your own life.

All three heroic men were, in their time, military leaders, participated in warfare and killed many enemies. At Moses' command the whole army of Pharaoh was demolished in the Red Sea crossing! Was that act of God in the will of God? Indeed, it was. What were all the deliverances of Israel if they were not in the will of God? What kind of a God would do such things as deliver, provide for, protect and guide His chosen people in the wilderness and beyond? If the purposes of God are somehow irrelevant to warfare, we would have to rethink mountains of evidence to the contrary. However, if God is involved in human affairs, and has intervened historically, then Scripture can be read accurately and factually as it has been for centuries whether in the form of a scroll, or the form of a book.

So to answer the question, "Can we extract anything about the will of God from their whole lives as recorded in Scripture?" I would say, "Yes." Insofar as you can walk by faith (Abraham) and be obedient (as was Moses) and, in everyday seek to be someone who is after God's own heart (like King David), you will receive favor as did Noah.

We ask you too, my brothers, to get to know those who work so hard among you. They are your spiritual leaders to keep you on the right path. Because of this high task of theirs, hold them in highest honour. Live together in peace, and our instruction to this end is to reprimand the unruly, encourage the timid, help the weak and be very patient with all men. Be sure that no one repays a bad turn by a bad turn; good should be your objective always, among yourselves and in the world at large. Be happy in your faith at all times. Never stop praying. Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be. If you follow this advice you will be working out the will of God expressed to you in Jesus Christ. Philips, 1 Thess. 5:18.

The minister said he wished to demystify the Scriptures. He ended up demystifying himself. He taught that the will of God is not specific, is not dangerous, not confused—that it is pretty much left up to us to decide what's best for us. Hmm. If that's the case, we are in for some serious bumps in the road. For from my perspective, the revealed will of God was specific, dangerous and clear if you are in His will you are on His ark and that is indeed favorable.

Amen.