

“What Are Godly Expectations?” - June 18, 2017
by Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

What Are Godly Expectations?

Genesis 9:8-17

When we were told the story of Noah as children, we concentrated on the animals or Noah. As adults, let's focus on the story's main character: God. Have you noticed that Noah is speechless? The animals are obedient to God's command. God grapples with grief here. God is wrestling with his 'good' creation.

As we read this story, let's think of the mind of God. As God sees society begin to crumble, as evil spreads in humankind, God begins to ponder creation itself. Evil has made 'chaos' commonplace and 'iniquity' triumphs. It's as if God throws up his hands in frustration, saying *“What on earth has happen to my creation?”*

As heart-rending as it is for parents to discipline their children, so too in today's story we see God's discipline, but it comes with a broken heart. Even in the verdict we discern God's commitment to his creation. Again, in a word, we see God's grace. There is nothing humanity can do . . . it is ALL of God. God makes this one-way covenant with not just Noah and his family, but with his descendants and all of creation, to never again use power to destroy the creation. God's energy will henceforth be used to build and not destroy.

We know that evil was not eliminated from earth. Continuing to read the Book of Genesis, we discover humanity choosing evil over good, and we observe and experience evil today. But, God's promise to Noah and the world is seen in the rainbow. God will not destroy the creation but will renovate it.

When grace redeems us it's not because we have our act together. St Paul tells us in the letter to the Church in Rome, that our good works are like filthy rags and cannot buy us salvation. It is only the righteousness of Jesus Christ that quenches God's wrath.

This is a trustworthy covenant. When God gave Abraham a covenant the sign of that covenant was circumcision. When God gave Moses a covenant the sign was the Sabbath. Noah's sign is the rainbow. God keeps his promises. The eye of God and our eye of faith meet at the rainbow. Faith grabs hold of the promise attached to the sign. The sign and the word go together. God promises and sticks a sign on it. The rainbow is God's answer to Noah's altar.

God's covenant is unilateral not bilateral. This is a covenant made by one and not two. It is a promise made by God with no consultation with humankind, no negotiation whatsoever. You will not find any talk of *"If you do this then I will do that."* Verse 11 says, *"I establish my covenant."* Not we, always I.

The covenant is not only unilateral but unconditional. God says, *"I establish."* The word in Hebrew is "Qumin" which means 'to make firm,' or to 'stand solidly.' Humanity can do nothing to cause me to make it or brake it. God stipulates that I'm doing it and you are not.

God's pledge comes with expectations. We may expect God not to destroy creation; that God will judge with a broken heart; that God is not without feelings and does more than we can ask or think to save humankind. We may expect that God will remember and honor our faithfulness. Unlike ourselves, we can expect God to continue to be selfless; to do what is necessary to keep this covenant.

As we remember the story of Noah, what captivates me is the picture of our God who is not intimidating, but One who wishes creation to be restored as it was created to be. The choice, as with Noah, is up to you and me: to follow God or not. Alleluia. Amen