



EXPOSITION

Monthly Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

What do you think of when you see dandelions? I know what I think, and my thoughts usually tend toward work! Pulling dandelions and spreading 'weed and feed' on my yard each Spring is not a chore that excites me. So you can imagine my surprise last month when I saw dandelions sprouting in an open field. My enjoyment of the warm weather was immediately interrupted by the sight of the dandelions. "I can't believe it," I shared with my wife, "dandelions are growing in December!" To which she said, "Yes, they are growing *because* of the warm weather."

What a wonderful lesson for me to consider: As the temporary broadleaf weed distracted my eyes from the beauty of the weather, so my view of things eternal is often disturbed by temporary inconveniences of life. I pray for prudent vision in 2016.



Jon Rinker, V.P.
Appalachian Bible College

Alumni in Ministry Spotlight

Jon was in the 2nd graduating class of VBTS (May 2001), and moved that summer with his family to WV to serve as a bi-vocational pastor of Crow Christian Church and join the staff of his alma mater, Appalachian Bible College. Jon and Sarah left a deep footprint in our academic community through their godly examples of grace and their hunger and thirst for the Word of God. As Jon looks back on his time at VBTS, he states: "My passion, which was stoked and fueled through VBTS, is to see the global advance of the Gospel and growth of Christ's Church for the glory of God." May God bless Jon and Sarah and their Christ-centered ministries at C.C.C. and A.B.C.

Thanksgiving Offering In Review

GOAL - \$40,000 to help summer tuition costs

GIVEN - **\$44,364.56** (To God be the glory!)





Truth for the Marketplace: “Noah found grace in God’s eyes”

Is Genesis 6:8 teaching that Noah earned God’s favor? The verse states: “But Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord.” How should we properly interpret Moses’ words? Is it possible for any man to attract God’s attention and blessing by living a blameless life?

Before we answer this critical question, the immediate context must be noted. Genesis 6 makes it clear that the society in which Noah lived had “decayed beyond recovery” (Matthews, *NAC*, p. 339). Just a few chapters earlier, God created man and his world and all was “very good” (1:31). But the willful choice of Adam and Eve to transgress the instruction of God led to the immediate decline of human society. Adam and Eve’s sin became the harbinger of human society’s decay; and by chapter 6 “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth” (6:5). Yet all was not lost. One human family stood above all others and, “Divine anguish finds immediate relief” (Matthews, p. 345).

Against this backdrop, Moses summarizes God’s redemptive plan for the ancient world in 6:8. God’s plan was to exercise his grace with one family and rescue them from the impending judgment. The Hebrew term in 6:8 translated “favor/grace” is used 13 more times in the book of Genesis (e.g., Abraham, 18:3; Lot, 19:19; Jacob, 32:5; and Joseph, 50:4), and 55 more times in the rest of the OT. This term is used in the OT 43 times in the phrase: “to find favor/grace in the eyes of” which is exactly how Moses described Noah in 6:8. However, what did Moses mean by this phrase? Here are three truths for the marketplace.

First, Moses did not mean that Noah deserved God’s favor by his outstanding personal character (6:9). One well-known author regrettably writes, Noah “possessed qualities that merited God’s favor.” This is not the purpose of the summary verse by Moses in 6:8. In fact, since Scripture will not contradict Scripture, Romans 11:5-6 makes it clear that the grace of God rests not in human works, but in the pleasure of God Himself to act on behalf of those in need (cf. 4:4-5). However one interprets 6:8, he must **not** conclude that Noah earned God’s favor.

Second, Moses began verse 8 with the contrasting conjunction “but.” This means the saturation of wickedness in human society (vv 1-7) was not completely universal. Noah was different. So, how did Noah escape this saturation of wickedness? The answer is not that Noah was a self-disciplined man, or that he did not seem to be dominated by sin. Noah, like his first parents, was in need of regeneration by God’s Spirit. While the text remains silent as to when this occurred in Noah’s life, the fact is, that it did.

Noah was “counted righteous” by God in regeneration before he “exercised righteousness” (Genesis 6:9) and “preached righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). This theological assumption places God’s favor to Noah in the self-determination and pleasure of God’s own will rather than with some merited favor owed to Noah. This is



precisely the spiritual background which Hebrews 11 assumes when it declares Noah to be a man who responded in obedience when approached by God to build an ark. Clearly, Noah's spiritual faith in God and His word distinguished him from the wicked men around him which, as Moses wrote in Genesis 6:5, "were filled with evil continually."

Third, the Hebrews 11 passage prefaces Noah's life of faith with these words: "*Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" The author of Hebrews relates an immeasurable blessing of Noah's belief in God: the "salvation to his household." Those who live a life of faith will be encouraged and comforted that their lives may persuasively influence the spiritual and moral atmosphere of their own families – even when the culture around them is soaked in evil. What a wonderful application from Noah's life for all of us who are dedicated to live a life of faith in a society that is rotting in wickedness. People of faith are not perfect, but they serve a God who works things out perfectly because "*He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*"