

BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE

REV DAVID W BAER
PRESIDENT & CEO FAMILIESALIVE®

“...where God has set his favor, there, and only there, the righteousness of God blossoms forth.”

Some of the most significant thoughts in our English Bible are introduced by the word *but*. The Chancellor of Wheaton College, V. Raymond Edman, wrote a book in 1962 entitled *But God!* Ok, I admit that I had to look up the book to be reminded of the subtitle, (*Little Lessons of Large Importance Learned from the Holy Scriptures*). But ever since I read it years ago, I have been sensitive to the Biblical lessons that may be identified by the little word *but*.

For instance, in Genesis, Joseph’s remarkable faith in God’s providence is captured in this sentence centered on a significant but; “You planned it for evil – *but* God meant it for good.” In the New Testament, Jesus counters the skepticism of the disciples’ question, “Who then can be saved?” with this declaration: “With men this is impossible, *but* with God all things are possible. Years later, the Apostle Paul pleads with the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh. “Three times,” recalls Paul, “I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. *But* he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” Little lessons captured in a small but powerful word.

In Genesis 6:8, just after a passage that addresses the sinfulness and depravity of all mankind, a most amazing thought is prefaced by this small word *but*: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” This is the first mention of Noah in the Bible and it precedes the truth that “...Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time” (verse 9). Noah’s righteousness is in marked contrast to the others living at the time before the flood. Verse 5 shows the context in which Noah’s character is commended: “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” It is against this black backdrop that Noah’s righteousness shines. But first, the Scripture declares that Noah found grace. Only secondly, does the Bible speak of his blameless character.

The order could not be more significant. It is the divine order of grace – unearned, free and given without condition to those God calls in the great eternal covenant. Paul would make sure we understand the doctrine rightly when he wrote the Ephesians, teaching them how those spiritually dead are made alive in Christ. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Thinking straight requires us to acknowledge the divine order: first, grace, then the good work of faithfulness mirrored in a character of life that glorifies the Lord.

Receiving God's favor was absolutely essential for Noah. He too was marked by Adam's fall. Depravity is universal. None of us have any real claim for gracious treatment. Apart from God's grace, none of us can stand. But, where God has set his favor, there, and only there, the righteousness of God blossoms forth. Those declared righteous by the gift of God's faith, begin to show forth righteousness in their character and conduct.

This truth is the underpinning for our ministry at CFM. Ours is a grace-oriented ministry. It is essential to family relationships. Practical issues in abundance flow from it. The question we must always ask ourselves is, "If God has dealt with me by the principle of grace, how can I relate to my loved ones in the same fashion?"

It is hard work, to be sure, but, (there's that word again), nothing is better than finding God's grace to be real and rich in your life – and nothing is better for your family than finding your grace to be real and rich toward them!