Grace Restores

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[0:00] This is Genesis chapter 8. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.
But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still in the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.
He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf.
So God knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth, and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.
[1:36] In the second month, in the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. Then God said to Noah, Go out from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.

Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.
So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.
Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took some of every clean animal, and some of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.
Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, see time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.
[2:42] Amen. This is God's holy word. We're working our way on Sunday mornings from Genesis 4 to 11, and the question we keep asking every week is, what's wrong with us?

And the answer has been the same every week, and that's sin. So as soon as sin begins in Genesis chapter 3, this series of texts is really a spiral of corruption, of things getting worse and worse.
And Adam and Eve take what is forbidden for them to eat, but then Cain murders his brother. And then after that, Cain's grandson murders a boy and sings a song about it and celebrates it.
And then after that, we read in Genesis 6 that the earth is entirely filled with corruption, and injustice cries up from the face of the ground. And on that basis, God sends the flood.
And so we know in our tradition, Westminster Shorter Catechism number one, that we were made as human beings to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.
[3:40] And Genesis 4 to 11 really tells the story, the chorus line from Genesis 11, that instead of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever, humanity, we have chosen to make a name for ourselves at every turn of history.

And the word that often gets used for that is that we chose from the beginning to be autonomous, self-governing, self-defined, self-named, that we want to make a name for ourselves.

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We don't want to be named by God. And so we see the plight of sin throughout the whole story of Genesis 4 to 11. And yet, every time that it seems to get worse, God's grace enters.
And the wages of sin is death, but Adam and Eve live for hundreds of years. They do not get what they deserve. And God's grace seems to overwhelm human sin over and over again every time throughout these stories.
And when you come to the Noah story, Noah's father, another lame man, names him Noah, which means rest in Hebrew.
[4:44] And you've arrived at this point where you say, why does God keep showing grace to humanity? And is the answer going to be in the birth of this boy, Noah? His name means rest.

And that's because we've been tracing this line from Genesis 3.15 forward. Genesis 3.15, God says to Eve, one day, a boy, a child from your offspring will crush the head of the serpent, crush the head of all evil.
And you get to Noah and you say, his name is rest. Lamech even says, in this one, the curse of the ground shall be removed. We shall find rest amid the curse.
And you say, is it him? And so one of the questions that the writer Moses wants you to ask of the flood story is, did Noah actually bring rest? And is he the savior that you think he might be based on the promise of Genesis 3.15 and the way his dad names him?
And so it drives you right into the heart as we approach toward the end of the flood story. The question of salvation, is Noah going to save us? Is Noah going to save the world? And that's so important because every religion has a salvation story, a narrative that it tells about what is wrong with you.
[5:56] And then what is the God that happens to be worshiped in that religion up to to make it right? So in Islam, in Islam, you are saved by worship and obedience.

And if you worship and you obey consistently over your lifetime, there's a possibility of salvation. In Buddhism, you're saved by enlightenment. So you want to escape the physical realm of suffering by exiting the physical realm altogether through a process of nirvana, of enlightenment.
And you have to pursue that and work towards that throughout your life. In secular humanism, there's a cheap and derivative story of salvation. And that derivative story of salvation is that salvation is really about being authentic to yourself, about being your true self, and not letting anything stop you from pursuing your authentic and true self.
And one of the things the flood story does is it tells you what the rest of the Bible tells you, and that's that Christianity is the one religion that says that you cannot achieve your own salvation, and you can't even really pursue your own salvation, that if you're to be saved, it has to entirely come from the outside.
I mean, if there's one way we said it in the baptism, to summarize the whole of the Christian message, it is God saves sinners. God does it all. And that's so distinct from the rest of the narratives of salvation in our culture and in the other religions.
[7:22] And when you come to this, you say, okay, God, what are you telling me here about the flood story? Am I just to read this as some great moral example of Noah, a man who was righteous?

And instead, we come to the Bible, and the question that we need to ask is, if it is God alone who can save sinners, what is this story telling me about how God saves?
And that's what Genesis 8 answers today. It answers it in three ways. It's number one, God remembered. Number two, God reset the world.
And number three, God made a way. All right, so the first thing we see, I think, in Genesis 8 is that God remembered. So that's what we see in verse 1. But before I explain that a little bit, it's important to remember that Genesis 7 comes before Genesis 8, and Genesis 7 and 8 go together. You can't separate them. And last week, we saw very briefly that there was a cosmic crime committed against God. And that cosmic crime was not only violence in all the land, but also respectable apathy, living life without any regard for God and not caring about God.
[8:33] And so the flood, the just judgment of God came into the world, but there was an ark. And the ark was God's gift of mercy to deliver Noah and his family through the waters of judgment.

And the ark was not really a ship. There was no rudder. Remember, there was no sails. There were no oars. Noah had no command over it, not at all.

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Instead, Noah, at the end of the story, was placed into the ark, and the Lord shut the door. And Noah need do nothing but hide inside the refuge of the ark. And the ark is Jesus Christ.
And that was where we saw the story of the flood take us last week into the story of salvation, salvation by judgment that God does it all. But then there's also chapter 8. And you come to chapter 8 this week, and there's this hinge verse, verse 1, but God remembered Noah and all the animals, all the beasts, all the livestock.
Now, that word remembered is not that God forgot about Noah. It's that he remembered that he loved Noah. The word to remember is really to say, I love Noah, and I know I want to save him.
[9:47] And so God remembers Noah and all the livestock. You imagine they've been in the ark for 100, no, sorry, one year and 10 days by the time of this event, by the time of Genesis chapter 8.

And so if you're in an ark closed in with a ton of stinky animals and, you know, your kids and their spouses, boy, 100, a year and 10 days in, you want out, right?
And God remembers Noah and he says, I will bring you out. And that is a word of compassion and love and saying, I made a promise to you and I will save you and I'll take it all the way.
What is this? What's going on in chapter 8? Down in verse 16 and 17, God commands Noah. He opens the door. He commands Noah to leave the ark with all the animals.
And it's this, it's that we learn here that salvation, salvation is not just going through the waters of God's judgment hidden inside of Christ, the ark.
[10:47] But salvation is bigger than that. In other words, let me put it this way. Salvation is not just about the forgiveness of your sins amid the judgment you deserve. Salvation is about being brought to the other side where God will open the door to you to a new land and a new life.

Salvation is far bigger than just the forgiveness of your sins, just getting through the ark of chaos, waters, and judgment. Salvation is actually about God bringing those waters to rest and opening the door and saying, now parade out into a new life, a new creation even.
And at the center of the story is not Noah's performance, but it's God remembering and saying, I really am going to bring Noah all the way. I'm going to save him fully. And he has nothing to do with it.
And it's so striking that if you were to go back to chapter 6 and then read all the way to chapter 9 through the whole flood story, Noah does not say a single word until chapter 9, verse 25, after the flood begins.
And every accent of the passage is that Noah does nothing. And God brings him all the way through, all the way to this point. Now, we said last week that Peter picks up on this and interprets this, chapter 7 and now chapter 8 together, in the New Testament when he talks about the fact that this corresponds to baptism.
[12:08] And this is what Peter says. He says, Now, Peter, what do you mean?

Only when you read chapter 7 and chapter 8 together can you get it. In chapter 7, Peter says it's like baptism. Noah went under or through the waters of God's judgment.
He went down, down, down, down, because that's what his sin deserves yet. Like in baptism, he went under the waters hidden inside an ark. And the ark is Jesus Christ.
But then chapter 8, Peter doesn't just say he survived the floodwaters. It says that he passed through them and came back up again. And you see that when you come to chapter 8, you realize that salvation is not just about being saved from judgment.
It's about being saved unto something. And that unto something is when the ark finds a place to rest on the top of the mountain and God opens the door and says that I have been building new creation for you.
[13:14] And Peter says that's what baptism means, that you go under the waters of judgment in an ark safely, in a refuge, but then you come up from the waters corresponding to the baptism of Jesus Christ, entering into a new life, into a new land.

And so we see here the very first thing is that when God remembers Noah, he's actually painting for us the entire picture of Christian salvation. That in Christ, you go under the waters with him, but in his resurrection, you come up from the waters and you're saved unto a new life, unto a new something.
Now, we learn secondly more. Let me put it this way. That means that we should be able to look at chapter 8 and find out some of the details and narrative form of what this new life is, new creation really is.

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And that's exactly what we have. What is this salvation, secondly? And we learn here that salvation is when God resets the world. Now, remember, Genesis 7 and Genesis 8 have to be read together. And so last week in Genesis 7, we had this moment in verse 11 where God brought the waters up from the ground and down from the heavens.
[14:28] And we said last week that that sounded just like Genesis 1 language, except a reversal of Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, God put the waters above and the waters below in their place and made the dry land.

But in Genesis 7, the flood is a decreation event. Now, listen to what happens here in Genesis chapter 8 in verse 2. The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed and the rains of the heaven were restrained and the waters receded.
Now, the commentators are all so in agreement on this that when you start to read through the details of chapter 8, you start to see not decreation but a recreation event.
And that recreation event seems to track through all the different days of Genesis chapter 1. So in Genesis chapter 1 on day 2, God put the waters in their place.
And then in Genesis chapter 8 verse 2, God puts the waters back in their place. It's just like day 2 again. It's like a new creation all over. And I'll just briefly walk you through these.
[15:35] What about day 3 in Genesis 1? In day 3 in Genesis 1, when the waters are put in their place, dry land appears that humans can live on. And look down at Genesis chapter 8 verses 3 to 5.

After the waters recede, all the way at the end of verse 5, it says, now that the waters have gone back to their place, the mountains could be seen. Dry land appears. And it says it again at the end of the passage, that dry land emerged.
What about day 3? What happens in Genesis 1 on day 3? The plants begin to grow. Vegetation begins to arise. And here in this story, Moses sends out a dove, and the dove brings back an olive leaf.
Vegetation begins to arise again from the ground. And the olive branch, the olive leaf in the Bible means peace with God. It means reconciliation with God.
Just as the dove at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit would condescend upon Christ. So here, there's a condescension of peace that's being spoken.
[16:37] Day 4. Oh man, this one. In Genesis chapter 1, in day 4, God says, I'm giving the sun and the moon and the stars so that there will be seasons, day and night, evening and morning, year after year.

And then when you get to Genesis 8, at the end in verse 22, he says, day and night, summer and winter, the seasons will be here forever. And you could go on and on. The birds over the waters, day 5 in Genesis 1.
Well, he sends out the raven and the dove. Day 6. The day 6 in Genesis 1, the creatures are made, every living thing. And Genesis 1 is quoted in verse 17 and 19 to describe every living creature that came out of the ark.
And then day 6 again, and here's where you really know that Genesis 8 is a recreation, a new creation corresponding to Genesis 1. And that's down in chapter 8, verse 17.
God says to Moses, to Noah, sorry, bring out with you every living thing that is with you, all the birds and animals, that they may swarm on the earth. And then there's the language, that they would be fruitful and multiply on all the earth.
[17:48] And that's a quote from Genesis 1, 28. And you see, what's happening here is that the flood story, the just judgment of God was de-creation. But in Genesis chapter 8, God is recreating the world.

He's given a whole new creation. And it follows the sequence of the days of creation even in the way that Noah observes the land after the waters have receded. I'll cap it all off with this.
In verse 2, look at verse, sorry, the end of verse 1 with me. It says, God made a wind blow over the earth and the water subsided. That Hebrew word, God made a wind, is the word ruach.
It means wind or spirit in the Old Testament. And it's the same phrase that shows up in Genesis 1, verse 2, that God made the heavens and the earth.
And what happened? The ruach came and covered over the face of the waters, hovered over the face of the waters. Here, it's the same line that the ruach, the spirit, not just the wind, but the spirit hovered over the face of the waters.

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[18:51] What is happening here? This is Noah, a second Adam, stepping out into a world that was submerged in God's judgment that now has been remade.

And what does it teach us? It teaches us that salvation is more than just the forgiveness of sins. It's the whole salvation story. It's that you Christian friends are being saved unto new creation.
And so you can't cut the story off. You know, the bookends of the story, we talk about our creation and fall and redemption and new creation. But it can be our tendency oftentimes to cut the bookends off and to say, what's the gospel?
Well, the gospel is that you're a sinner and you need redemption. And that is the gospel. That's exactly what Genesis 7 said. But when you get to Genesis 8, you realize that the whole gospel is that God made you and that God will restore you and bring you all the way in to the new creation. That you have to have the whole story, the broad gospel, the big gospel to understand what Christianity is actually teaching, the full story of redemption. Now, thirdly and finally, God made a way.
[20:05] Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a famous French philosopher in the Enlightenment in the 18th century. And like all of the Enlightenment philosophers at the time, there was really a work among them to try to rethink what's wrong with humanity and what's wrong with the world.

I don't know if you guys have looked at the news in the last 24 hours, but the last 24 hours have had a heavy slate of very awful things. A terrorism attack, multiple shootings that were with multiple victims, a hurricane.
I mean, all sorts of things have happened this week in the news. And the news comes across really bad. And in the same way, in the 18th century, these philosophers were looking at horrific events like the Lisbon earthquake in Portugal.
And they were saying, what is wrong with the world? What is wrong with humanity? But what they wanted to do was rethink that and suggest an alternative idea. And Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the most famous, he wrote a book about this.
And he wrote a book really about children and their education. And what he said was that the problem is not with children or not with youth, not with even the human heart.
[21:14] The problem is with culture and it's with society and it's with not nature, but nurture, its environment. So listen to what he writes. He says, everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author.

Everything degenerates when it's put into the hands of men, humankind. And what he was saying there is that the problem we face as humans is not what we are. It's not ethical.
It's not something in us. He's saying it's entirely outside. So his experiment was if you take a group of children and you separate them from society and you let them live on their own, they will actually never fall into degeneracy.
They'll never fall into big sins. They'll never fall into corruption. Now, listen, Genesis 8 is, to put it this way, the experiment that Rousseau needed to see.
Because what's happened in Genesis 8? In Genesis 8, God has sent a flood upon the world. And the only people that are left are Noah and his family. And Noah and his family are called blameless and righteous.
[22:17] And then you read verse 20 and 21. And what does it say? It says, Noah built an altar to the Lord and he offered a sacrifice.

In verse 21, the Lord smelled the aroma and the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of humanity. Why? For the intention of the human heart is evil from his youth.
Now, what's so striking as we finish is that the same diagnosis God gave for sending the flood is quoted here in 821.
Back in chapter 6, God said, I am bringing the flood to the world, judgment to the world, because there is nothing but evil in the human heart from the time of their youth. But then you come to chapter 8 and he said, I will never again flood the world because the human heart is evil from the time of their youth.
You see, he says, on the one hand, I'm going to flood the world because the human heart is so evil. On the other hand, I will never again flood the world because the human heart is so evil. And what is he talking about here?
[23:25] The slate has been wiped clean. We've just saw in point two that Noah has entered into new creation. Is he the one that would bring rest to the world in a beautiful land full of new creation

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life?

And as soon as we get to verse 20 and 21, who is God talking about when he said the intention of the heart is only evil? He's talking about Noah.
And he's saying there's a big problem left. And that's that I might have brought just judgment upon the world and we might have started over. And it's sort of like Genesis 1 all over again.
But Noah still has an evil heart and so does his family. And you see what God is saying? He's saying, I will never again flood the world like this because though I have the right to bring just judgment upon humanity for their sins, though I have the right and it is good and all that God does is good, I want humans.
What is he saying? He's remembering humanity. He's saying, if I were to bring only judgment, it's never going to fix the deepest problem. And the deepest problem is the human heart. You know, I can wipe the slate clean and I can start over with a new Adam and his family, but they're still full of sin.
[24:44] And if I'm going to do the very purposes of my creation, which is to be with humanity forever and enjoy them and they enjoy me, something has to change.

Something has to be different. Enter sacrifice. This moment in verse 20 is the first time the word altar is used in the Bible. And it's the first time a particular type of sacrifice is mentioned in the Bible. In Hebrew, it's called the olah sacrifice. It translates here to the whole burnt offering. And it's a very particular type of offering. We read about it in Leviticus.
It's an offering where the sinner would come and place their hand upon the head of the bull, the goat, the lamb that's being offered. And in that proclamation, what would happen is what's called expiation.
And expiation is a fancy word for a simple idea. It's when you say, my sins have been fully transferred to this creature and it will be burned.
[25:46] It will die fully. It will be completely offered up to God. And Noah did that. And he was saying, Lord, at the beginning of this new world, this, is it new creation? All I can say is, I need you to take my sins away.

And he did that. And God received that offering. And God stayed the justice that Noah also deserved. And what was God saying? God was saying, if I continue to bring justice to this world like is right, like is due, it's never going to ultimately lead to new creation because people are just going to keep doing the same things.
And Rousseau was so wrong. And the Lord said, no, the human heart has to be fixed. And the only way to do that is to have justice and mercy kiss, have justice and mercy meet.
And so in this great sacrifice, this whole burnt offering, not only are your sins transferred to another and taken away from you, but then they're also propitiated, which means that God then turns and looks at you and says, because your sin has been taken away, I am with you and for you and reconciled with you forever.
Now, do you know, friends, that in Romans 3 and Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 5, all three of those places, it says that Jesus Christ is our whole burnt offering.
[27:06] You see, he is the ark that you went down into the floodwaters with and he kept you. But then it's not enough, but then it's not enough.

He also had to completely give himself away as a whole burnt offering so that your sins could be placed on him and God could say, I have now reconciled myself to you fully and finally and forever.
I'll finish with this. You know, you think about where Genesis 8 in the Bible finds its ultimate fulfillment. I love the Lord of the Rings, I think is somewhat known here.
And in the end of the story of the Lord of the Rings, the return of the king after the great battle of Minas Tirith and has happened and the ring has been destroyed, Samwise Gamgee, Frodo's dear friend, he wakes up from a sleep where he thought he was dead.
And he turns to Gandalf and he says, Gandalf, I thought you were dead. In fact, I thought I was dead. And then he gives that famous phrase. He asks, are all the sad things that have happened going to come untrue?
[28:17] And he's really asking the same question that Genesis 8 was asking. When Noah walked out of the ark, is he the one in which we would find rest? Is he the one that would usher in new creation?

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Is it in Noah that all the sad things will come untrue? And of course, the answer is that it's only in the one that he points to, the true and better Noah, Jesus Christ, who became for you a whole burnt offering so that you might step out of the ark, the safety, the refuge of the cross into his resurrection life, his new creation.
And that's such good news because where the fulfillment of Genesis 8 lands is in Revelation chapter 21. In this one little line, in that day, the day of new creation, the sea will be no more. There will be no more sea. Now, that is not bad news for you beach lovers. It's not saying there will be no more beaches, there will be no more water, there will be no more places to swim. No, what's it saying?
What does it mean? Revelation 21, the new creation, there will be no more sea, there will be no more floodwaters. There will be no more sin, there will be no more chaos.
[29:28] In that day, all of these problems will be gone and you will step out of the ark into the new creation because you step from the cross into resurrection life. And that's the story of Genesis 7 and 8 together.

At the cross, Jesus was there. And of course, you remember he was hanging next to a thief. In Genesis chapter 8, verse 1, it says that the basis of Noah's salvation is that God remembered Noah.
The basis of Noah's salvation is that God remembered him. It means that he loved him. And at the cross, Jesus was hanging next to a thief. And that thief had no more fresh starts left.
That thief was moments away from death. A man that was being publicly executed. A man that had no hope left in the world, to be sure. And what did he say to Jesus? He said, will you remember me?
So it doesn't matter if you've lived a blameless life, a good, moral, respectable person, decent person like Noah, and boy, was he. He needed expiation and propitiation. Noah did.
[30:36] And it doesn't matter if you're like the thief on the cross and you say, my life has been nothing but ruin. God says in Christ Jesus, he will remember you.

And you need do nothing but ask and say, Lord, remember me. And he will, and he will take you to new creation. Let us pray.
Father, we ask that you would remember us today. And I ask that you would remember specifically individuals here that are looking for hope. And so remember us now as we sing your praises and we sing of the God who takes us all the way through the storm, all the way into resurrection life, into new creation.
And we ask for that love from you now by faith. In Jesus' name, amen.

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