Grace That Covers

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0:00] And I'm going to invite Chris to come and read scripture for us. This is Genesis chapter 9 verses 1 to 7 and then 18 to 28.

And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.
And for your lifeblood I will require reckoning. From every beast I will require it, and from every man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of a man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.
For God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply. Team on the earth and multiply it. The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth.
Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah. And from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.
[1:24] He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backwards and covered the nakedness of their father.

Their faces were turned backwards, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew that his youngest son, what his youngest son had done to him, he said, Cursed be Canaan.
A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers. He also said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.
After the flood, Noah lived for 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray.
Lord, as we come to your word, we ask that you would give us eyes of faith to receive it in the way that you've delivered it, that we would see it as your word, as the Bible that you've given us, and that we would see what you have for us here, Lord, that our lives would be changed, that even in our seats today, that in some way you would be at work in us to change us from the inside out.
[2:44] And so we ask for your help now, in Christ's name. Amen. We're working through a series on Genesis 4-11, and Genesis 4-11 comes right after Genesis 1-3, and in that we saw God in Genesis 1 create the world, and then in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve, the first humans, they fell into sin and rebellion against God.

Now, Genesis 4-11 cycles then of the same thing. There's a creation event and a fall, a decline. Remember, right before the flood, there was violence in all the earth. It was totally corrupted. And then in the flood, we saw God unmake the world in a way, and then through the ark and through Noah and his family remake the world, reset it, reconstitute it like Genesis 1 all over again.
And then at the end of Genesis 8, Noah and his family parade out from the ark with the animals. And you've got a sort of a new Adam and a second Eve and all these animals being ushered out into a new world, a garden.
And it's like creation all over again. And yet, we read at the same time in chapter 8, verse 21, that Noah took his heart into the ark, and he took his heart out of the ark as well.
[4:04] And at the core, even the best man on earth at the time, it says his heart was only full of evil sin from the time of his youth. And so that means that as you come to this passage today, think about it, dear reader.

If there has been a creation event and a fall event and a decline event and a recreation event already in the story from Genesis 1 to Genesis 8, and God in Genesis 8 has just remade the world

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and sent his people back into the world, we see so many quotes from Genesis 1 all throughout the passage for that reason.
What's going to happen next? If God's just recreated the world, but he's put sinful human beings back into it, what do you expect is going to happen next?
And that's exactly what we find in this passage today in verses 1 to 7 that Chris read. God gives you not only a cosmic structure for creation, but also a moral structure.
But then in verses 18 to 29, we have this very sad and miserable story of what happens when people bring their sin off the ark back into the world.
[5:12] And it's a really miserable scene. And so let's learn what God has to teach us here. There's a few lessons. Number one, there's a call to guard life. Secondly, there's a failure to honor people here.

And then finally, the man who covers us. So first, let's think about the call of God in verses 1 to 7 to guard and protect life.
All right, so if you look down at verse 1, you'll see that it says, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And then if you look down at verse 7, you'll see that it says, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth.
That's the same sentence with a couple words swapped out. And you see that verse 1 and verse 7 make a sandwich. And there's filling in the middle of that sandwich. And that sandwich, verses 1 and verses 7, are both quotes from Genesis 128.
And so what we have here is God taking the command he gave to Adam and Eve, a blessing, and re-giving it, again, re-issuing it to Noah and to his family. As soon as they come out of the ark.
[6:15] And so what's happening here? Well, verses 2 to 6 is the meat of that sandwich. Verse 1 to 7, the bread. Verses 2 to 6, the meat. And in that, you've got God telling you, how then should you live in a newly structured world?

A world that's been protected and recreated. And we saw last week that he's covenanted with all of creation and said, I'm keeping this place around. I'm not going to get rid of it. God's affection for the world and for humans and for animals and for the land and for creatures and now that he's decided he's keeping it.
Seed time and harvest. It's not going to go away. God, the great author, remember, the great director of history. It's as if in Genesis 8 and 9, he says, okay, once more from the top. I'm keeping this place.
But along with that cosmic structure, land and animals and humans and stars and galaxies and sun, moon, and gravity, now in verses 1 to 7, he gives you the moral structure that fits in the cosmic structure.
You know, you don't build a house and make plans for all the rooms and then use the rooms in the exact opposite way that you plan for. You wouldn't put your bedroom in the toilet. No, in the same way, the cosmic structure, God gave you a cosmic structure.
[7:26] But with that, he also attaches a moral structure. And that's what we're reading about in verses 1 to 7 when God creates the world. So this is a blessing. God is saying, the very things I plan to do in Genesis 1, I'm going to do from Genesis 9 forward.

I'm going to bless you with the command to subdue the earth and to keep it. And so really what we have here is the commands to say, look, be a human. Go out and make a city. Go out and build society.
Go out and work. Go out and flourish. Go out and work. Yet, yet, if you read verses 1 to 6 carefully, one of the things you may have noticed is while this looks like Genesis 1, there's differences.
And so if you look at chapter 9, verse 1, it says in 9-1, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. But if you were to go back and read Genesis 1-28, it would say, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.
And so there's something missing. And that's because the word subdue in Genesis 1 has the sense of Adam and Eve and humanity working in total harmony and peace with the land and with the animals to build society.
[8:32] But here that's missing. Why? Because what we have here is a reissuing of the commands of Genesis 1, but in a world of sin. And that means they're just a little bit different. God is saying, I'm keeping it.

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I'm keeping the moral structure. I'm keeping the cosmic structure, but I'm changing it just a bit in order to protect life and steward life. And so keep going. In chapter 9, verse 2, the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and every bird and everything that creeps on the ground.
He said the same thing in Genesis 1-28. But he said there, take dominion over every beast of the earth, every creeping thing, every bird of the air. Here, do you see what's been replaced? Not dominion.
That's a partnership. That's a relationship of harmony. But here, the fear and dread of you will be on all the animals, all the beasts of the field. Why? Because God is saying, you, humanity, you rebelled against me.
And Noah, you brought your sin off the ark. And so the relationship you have with the animals, with the land, and with humans is not what it once was. And so God is doing everything he can to protect humanity by saying, now the animals are going to be skittish.
[9:39] They're going to be afraid of you so that you can keep society. They're going to stay away from you so that your cities are not overrun and ultimately ruined. There's a wonderful thought about this in Isaiah chapter 11, that when Christ comes again, it says, Now, that's a picture of what's coming, but that's a picture of what was in Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

And now he's saying, but you've ruined your relationship with the animals. And so now they fear you and they dread you and domestication and all sorts of things have to be introduced. And then in verses 5 and 6, you've got him speak about this reckoning because of violence.
So he turns to the next line. You should expect this. If you go back and read Genesis 1, he's going to tell you, be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth. Take dominion over all the animals.
And then the very next thing would be what? And you, remember, you're made in the image of God. And you're to honor one another in that and have relationships with humans in that. And that's exactly what he does here.
But in verse 5 and 6, he says, Whoever sheds the blood of humanity, by humanity shall his blood be shed. So we have the first positive law in history, the first outright spoken law against murder, which will come up again in the Ten Commandments.
[11:07] Why? It's saying, look, you still are the image of God and you're to honor the image of God. But because of sin, the command has changed. And now I have to protect you from one another by providing a way of justice in the midst of human violence that we already saw back in Genesis chapter 6.

Now listen, here's the point. Genesis 1 was the ideal. But in a world of sin, Genesis 9 is the real. It's how we then should live amid a world full of sin and corruption.
And that means God is saying to us, the grain of creation still stands. The cosmic structure still stands. There is a moral structure that still stands. But it's been amended with guardrails in order to protect life so that the stage of redemption could play out all the way to the end.
Let me give you a few applications. Number one, what this means. It means, first, there is such a thing as the moral order. And the moral order, the grain of the universe, the way we should live, is not something that arises from our feelings, from the way we feel.
In 1920s, in the 1920s, there was a group of philosophers that came up with something in England called the Boo Harathesis. And the Boo Harathesis was this, that all moral claims, all claims of value, are nothing but your boo or hurrah to anything anybody else says.
[12:32] In other words, what were they saying? They were saying there's no such thing as moral value or moral order. All you can really say is that every moral claim is just saying, boo, I don't like that. Or hurrah, I love that. I'm with that.

And that's all morality really is. It's a construct of society. That was the Boo Harathesis. And it's striking that in 1960, that was published in the 1920s, Bertrand Russell, one of the leading atheists of the 20th century, this is what he said in a letter to a friend.
He said, I find myself incapable of believing that all that is wrong with the wanton cruelty in the world is simply that I don't like it. And what we're reading here is that there is a moral structure to the universe, a grain.
And it's actually outside of us. It's a goodness that stands above us and is bigger than us and comes into our lives, into our hearts by way of a gift. The second thing we read here is that the real heartbeat of that moral order, and there's so much detail here to talk about, but the real heartbeat of that moral order is stewarding life and protecting life.

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That's the real heartbeat God gives. That's not just human life, by the way. That's also animal life and the life of the land and the life of all the creatures. It's striking here that God, in the fear and dread of animals related to us, says you can eat meat.
[13:49] He allows that. It had already been happening prior, but there's a real positive command here that allows for that. And then right after, there's a limitation. Strange to our modern eyes and ears.

It says, verse 4, but you shall not drink the blood. And you say today, I don't want to drink the blood, but there's a reason we don't want to drink the blood. And that's because God gave this command in Genesis 9.
And in the pagan societies in the ancient Near East that were all around Israel going forward after this, it was normal for people to drink blood in cult ritual as an act of worship. But here, just to get down right to the heart of what he's saying, the reason God says this, and he reissues this in Leviticus, is because he's saying blood is the sign of life.
It's a symbol of life. And I want you to know that even though I allow you to use the animals for food and to steward them in careful and appropriate ways, when you give their blood away without taking it, what are you saying?
You're saying, I recognize that I am not the master of this creature. I didn't give it its life. I don't provide its life. I am nothing but a steward. I am a guest at the table of God.
[14:59] And he's invited me to take and use, but with a reminder, and this is why we pray at meals, to say, this is not the creature I made. I'm a steward. I'm not a master.

And the same way with every single creature that he made. And the heart of the heart, thirdly, by way of application, the heart of the heart of this is not just that animal life is to be stewarded, and creaturely life, and the life of the land.
But also, very clearly, this is all about the fact that it's human life that is most precious to God. And so, in verse 5, he says something really interesting. He says, In your lifeblood I will require a reckoning.
So, for murder, from even beasts I will require a reckoning for murder of human beings. And then he writes, From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. If you translate that literally, it actually says, From every man I will require a reckoning from his brother.
Why? Because we've already seen what two brothers did. Cain murdered his brother. And he's saying, For that grand injustice, I require justice.
[16:10] And so, God is saying, I'm all about protecting human life. And society cannot flourish with murder being left untouched by the courts of justice in some way, shape, and form. And you see that at the heart of this.

He says, You are the image of God. Your role is to value life and to protect it and to care for it. And the takeaway of this section is that the Christian view is so balanced. And here it is. People are so precious to God.
You are made in God's image. And he values you so much. And the land and the animals and the creatures and the bugs matter to God so much too. And that means that it's wrong on the one hand to say, You know, nature was here first.
Nature is more important than people. There's a way of making ecology into an idol. And the Bible is saying no to that. But on the other hand, there's a way of dismissing care of the land and care of animals altogether.
And the Bible is saying no to that too. And it's so balanced. It's saying human beings are so precious to God. They're the most precious and valuable. But I've made a covenant with everything. And you are to value everything and steward it in the order, the moral order that I've given you to do that.
[17:17] Now listen, that means that we've got to look out at the world and see every single person as infinitely precious. C.S. Lewis, Weight of Glory, a quote you have definitely heard from this pulpit several times before.

There are no ordinary people, Lewis writes. You've never talked to a mere mortal. It is only immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit.
And the invitation here is to see every human being in the same way that God sees every human being, full of value. And I want to ask you, do you see the person on the bus that, the stranger on the bus that way?

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Do you see your colleague that is so annoying that way? Do you, even the people that smell, you know, all of us, we are precious to God and we've got to look out and see value in every single person.
And here's a great test. Gavin, who preached a few weeks back, brought up David Brooks' wonderful book, How to Know a Person. And David Brooks talks about being either an illuminator or a diminisher.
[18:23] A diminisher. An illuminator is a person who encourages and values others. And people actually see that you value them. That's an illuminator. A diminisher is a person who, where people really know that they're not valued by you, but maybe used, instrumentalized.

And I want to ask you, here's a great test. Can you ask this morning, as one writer puts it, do you have the courage to ask this morning, do I value people and do they know that?
And one of the ways to know the answer to that question is, are people willing to come to you to talk about their problems? And that's one of the ways that you can know that people really value.
And you got to hear that here. The call is guard life, protect life, steward life, value life, love life. Not only human beings, but all the creatures that God has made. Learn what God commands about how to steward everything to his glory.
Secondly, briefly, and yet, verse 18 to 28. God, in a covenant in the in-between section, 9 to 17, says, I'm keeping the cosmic structure of reality so I can save this world.
[19:36] God says, here's the moral structure I'm giving you. But then the very first story we get after the flood, is of a total failure to steward life and protect life and guard life and value others and care for life.

And that's the story about Noah and his son, Ham. Now, Noah, Moses, I should say, the writer, he is shouting at us here to see the parallels.
Remember Genesis 1 and Genesis 9? Genesis 3 and Genesis 9 now. Just look at this. In verse 20, and we'll only focus on 20 to 24 this morning, Noah began to be a man of the soil.
But in Hebrew, that phrase says, Noah began to be an Adam of the Adamah. So the word for soil or ground is Adam with an H on the end, Adamah.
And that's the same phrase that's used of who? Adam himself in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2 and 3. An Adam of the Adamah. That's how Noah is titled here. And then right after that, what happens?
[20:37] Well, this Adam of the Adamah, this Adam of the ground, he planted a vineyard. What's a vineyard? A vineyard is a garden. And so Moses is already saying, do you see?

This is a second Adam? An Adam of the Adamah? And what did he do? Right after the recreation of the world, he planted a vineyard and he went into it? Just like Adam was called to plant a garden and enter into it.
And then in verse 21, what does he do? He drinks of the wine and becomes drunk. And to drink of wine from a vineyard, of course, what do you have to do? You have to reach out your hand and you have to take of the fruit of the vine.
And the great sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of God was they reached out and they took what was forbidden to them and they ate and they knew they were naked. And here in the same way, this second Adam, the Adam of the Adamah in the garden that God told him to plant goes into the garden and he takes of the fruit, but he takes of it in excess in the wrong way.
And what happens immediately, it says that his nakedness was uncovered, just like Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter three. And if you keep going, just after Adam and Eve take of the fruit and they're naked and they're ashamed, in the very next story, a son lets the beast called sin rule over his life and he murders his brother.
[22:01] And what do we have in this story? Well, we have this new Adam of the Adamah who reaches out and takes fruit in a way he should not and his nakedness is uncovered. And then just like Genesis four with Cain, his son Ham commits a great evil against him and ruins the family.

So just remember that we talked about the cycles. If you have a cycle of creation, what do you expect next, a fall? And then if you have a fall, you have a great decline. And that's exactly the cycle that we're reading about here all over again.
And what is this sin that Cain commits? I won't say much about it, but in verse 22, to see the nakedness of a father is a euphemism in the Bible.

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So it's very probably not as literal as it reads on the surface, a simple seeing of nakedness when they all live in the same household. Instead, it's something more than that. And you can read about that euphemism in Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20, but it's most certainly a reference, a euphemism for serious sexual sin.
And in Leviticus 18 and 20, we have an explanation of the multiple possibilities of that sexual sin that can be either referencing Noah or his wife.
[23:11] Because the euphemism to uncover the nakedness of a father in Leviticus also references the nakedness of a wife. And so this is extreme sexual sin that's being talked about here.

And what's happening is that Cain, Ham, let the beast of sin rule over him. And a great fall occurs here. We were made to steward life and protect life and value life and honor life.
And the very first story we get after what was thought to be the best man on earth, Noah comes out into the world, we get a horrific, a miserable scene, a sad scene of what happens when the heart of sin is allowed, like Cain and Ham's life to rule over us.
And so there's a massive gap that takes place here between what we were made to be and what this first family after the flood actually are. And if you think about these characters as we close, as we come to a close, if you think about these characters, what was Noah's sin at the core in this moment?
In Genesis chapter three, verse six, it says that Adam was with Eve as she reached out and took the fruit. He, the priest of the garden, the husband of his great wife Eve, the mother of all life, he was passive, he let her do that.
[24:36] He stood by and he did nothing and he let the world fall into ruin. Noah gets drunk and he passes out from taking of the tree. And what is his great sin?

It is passivity. He stands by in this horrible scene and lets this happen to his family. He's just like Adam. And I know that there's so many applications that we could talk about here, but I just wanna ask you, who in your life maybe is God calling you to move toward in agency, not passivity, in order to protect, value, guard, love, and help them to know how much you value them and are for them?
At the very core here, there's an invitation to not be passive in your Christian life and the stewardship of all that God's given you, especially the lives of people, but to be active.
And that was the sin of Adam. And it's the sin of Noah here. But then you think about Ham. What's the sin of Ham at the core? And boy, we could talk about the sin of Ham. It's a great evil and a miserable scene, but really at the heart of the sin of Ham is that he lets the beast in his heart turn him into a person that will use people.
He exploits and he instrumentalizes others, even in his family, for power and pleasure. And that's the great sin of Ham.
[26:05] And let me ask you a question this morning. When we see people, when I see people, especially close to me, do I see the image of God and the value and the preciousness of their life or am I struggling in my life with instrumentalizing the people that God has given me?

I don't love them for who they are. I use them in some way. And I think while we could talk about the massive gap of degree and types of sins that can be committed in passivity and instrumentalizing people in the world and creatures and animals and all that God's given us, a huge gap from the great evil that Ham commits here all the way down to the most minor infraction of gossip, where in gossip we use somebody else's nakedness, their shame for the sake of our good, instrumentalizing them.
I think we all know that there is a gap in our lives between who God made us to be in the moral structure in the universe and who we are. And we feel that in our hearts. We lay down at night in our beds and we think, why did I say that?
Why did I say that? Why did I not do that? Why was I passive? Why did I stand by? Why did I not lead? Why did I let that happen? Why did I not?
Why did I do? We all feel the weight of that. And the Bible from Genesis 3 to Genesis 9 gives you an exterior explanation. It's called nakedness.
[27:35] Nakedness is the external concept, the visible physical reality of what's going on in the inner life with sin. And it corresponds to the concept of shame.

And there's false shame in this life. There's shame that arises from things done to us. And we're not at all talking about that this morning. But there's real shame as well.

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And that real shame arises in the gap when we sense, I have not been and done who I was supposed to be and do. And I've said things and I've done things and I feel uncovered before God. And I wonder if any of you feel that way today. Psalm 134 says, who are we to hide? We can't hide from the living God. He sees all from the top to the bottom and the fig leaves don't work.
The coping doesn't work before him. The way of covering ourselves and blame shifting and building walls and stoicism doesn't work before him. What are we to do?
[28:29] And in steps Shem and Japheth. These two brothers, they cover their father's nakedness. And that's a euphemism. We don't know all that it means.

But it's certainly a euphemism. And they step in and grace and cover Noah. And what is Moses telling us in that moment? I think it's this. That Noah was a great man.
Boy, was he. Noah was called blameless in his day. He was the best of the people. He was a great man, but he was not a good man. Not to the bottom, not to the core.
He had a gap between the ideal and the real in his heart. And the whole story of Genesis 1 to 11 is who is the seed of the woman who is going to rescue this world from the seed of the serpent?
And we've wondered so far, is it Noah? And right now we find out. It is not Noah. But let me tell you, friends, if you feel the weight of shame and guilt in your life in any way, there is a second Adam who is far greater than Noah ever was.
[29:43] And Jesus Christ, the righteous, came into this world and he stood, Adam's sin was that he stood by while his bride was being murdered by the serpent.

Noah's sin was that he stood by in passivity while his bride and his family were being taken by this great evil. Jesus Christ is the great groom who stepped in the fray and became the guardian for his bride all the way.
Jesus Christ went to the cross taking on your shame, taking on your guilt. He was uncovered. Remember, they gambled his clothes away. He was naked because the exterior life showed us what he was doing spiritually.
And what he was doing spiritually was that he was taking on our guilt and our shame and our nakedness and all that we've done in this life to keep that gap between the ideal and the real.
And verse five says, by the blood for the blood of man, for all that we've done to shed blood in this world, the violence of this world, I will require a reckoning.
[30:53] And so he became that reckoning. His blood was spilled. It's in him. Look, you can look at him today and you can say, my debt is paid. It is paid in full. I am covered by the blood of the lamb.

He really did bear your shame. And so you can put it away. And I wanna invite you to something. And this is the last word. If you look to him today for covering, if you look to the blood of the lamb poured out for you that we're about to celebrate at this table, you will have the freedom to go forward and reread chapter nine, verses one to seven and ask the question, in what ways am I not right now valuing people in my life?
And in what ways do people, are they not able to come to me to talk about problems because I haven't yet shown them that I love them, that I value them? Look, you're safe to ask that question. You can have the courage to ask that question. Why? Because you're safe in Christ. Your shame has already been put away. And so you can say, I can change. I will change. I'm not scared to actually look at what's going on in here and grow and work on that and look at my idols and come up out of them because Jesus Christ has borne my shame to the uttermost.
You're free. You're safe. You can ask, do I really value people? And work on it. Let us pray. Father, we ask now as we come to the table, we would have an experience with you that we would look at our guilt and our shame and see it covered by the blood of the Lamb.
[32:22] And so bless our time now as we come to your meal and we pray that in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

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