

The Rainbow: A Sign of God's Abounding Grace

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Text: Genesis 9¹

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Series: Genesis (The Book of Beginnings)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Genesis 9**. The title of our study tonight is “The Rainbow: A Sign of God’s Abounding Grace”. We all want God’s blessing. Oftentimes we look at the storms of life and we might think God is cruel or aloof or forgetful of us. Why do loved ones suffer from cancer? Why do car accidents occur and cripple perfectly productive people?

We do not have time to give a full answer of the question of suffering tonight, except to say that suffering comes from sin and is the outcome of sinful living. Suffering could not occur in the human race if it were not for our own sinful choices. God must judge sin. All the suffering in this life is truly God’s merciful wake up call to turn to Him and receive forgiveness before it is too late.

Aren’t you glad God is long suffering and kind and is not willing “that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (**2 Peter 3:9**). Christ did not come to condemn the world. We are condemned already. We have condemned ourselves.

Genesis 6-8 show us that mainly that God cannot keep silent when we sin. He must act when his holiness and majesty are provoked. The New Testament warns us: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (**Galatians 6:7**).

Yet, in wrath he remembers mercy. In the midst of the clouds of judgment we see God’s amazing grace and blessing abounding. **Romans 5:20**, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”.

God did act. The human race was wiped off the earth. But in the midst of the clouds of judgment we see God’s amazing grace and blessing abounding.

We pray with the Jews of old...

Psalm 67:1, “May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face to shine upon us, Selah”.

God’s blessing is clear in **Genesis 8:20**...

I. The right **Response** to God’s Blessing is **worship** (8:20-22).

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

As Noah descended from the ark with his family and the animals, he sanctified the day with worship. And just like God accepted Abel's offering, He accepted Noah's offering.

Genesis 8:20-22, “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. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

Noah established worship as central to living after the flood. Remember that the Sabbath Day is established at creation, and beginning with chapter 9, it is like a new creation, a renovation of the earth.

Application: Do you take time to recognize God's blessing on your life? One way you can show your thankfulness is to gather on His appointed day. That ought to be how you structure your life. Many people are willing to add worship to their life. Very few are willing to structure their lives around the worship of God and the edification of God's people. The right response to God's blessing is worship.

Noah and his family are saved! They give an offering to the Lord.

II. The **Reward** of God's Blessing is family and food (9:1-4).

Genesis 9:1-4, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”

A. **Family**. We are to raise up families. Do you realize that our culture is dying in the USA? Do you know why? People don't want to have children. We are given the earth as a place of feasting. We are to have dominion and authority over all things and use them for the glory of God.

Family is central in God's plan to bless the earth. Even though our children are born sinners, they are a gift from God. They are made in His image and to be loved and cherished.

Psalm 127:3, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

- **Are you promoting a “family” culture in our church?** We want to be careful not to distract from worship, but you ought to encourage your children to sit with you in family worship in the church services as soon as they are able.

Application: Children are a great responsibility. We are to point them to the Lord. We are to raise up an army of saints! Mothers are called to be “workers at

home". Your first responsibility is your children. If it is possible, do not put your responsibility to raise your children off on others. There is no safer place for your child than his mother's arms.

- If you are married, can you say that you are encouraging a culture of fruitfulness?
- Do you encourage parents to raise a full quiver of children for the Lord?

B. **Food**. Notice that man is now specifically authorized to kill animals for food. **Verses 2-4**, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

Notice what God says. It's beautiful, "I give you everything". Eat. Celebrate. We are called to rise up and eat and celebrate. We are to partake of the fruit of the earth. Food is a wonderful way to glorify God. Be hospitable. Don't just feed family and friends. Edify and teach them. Show them your love.

Application: The application here is easy. Do you take time to eat with your family? Do you open your home to friends? When's the last time you had a church family to your home?

- **Is your home a place of open arms and hospitality for God's people?**

This is a primary way you build relationships in your family and friends and church. Deuteronomy 6 specifically mentions that we are to teach our children when we sit down at the table to eat. This is the pathway to God's blessing.

If you stop loving and following God, you will lose your family and your livelihood.

III. The **Responsibility** in God's Blessing is to **protect life** (vs. 4-7).

Life - Sanctity of Life / Image of God in Man

Verses 4-7, "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. 7 And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it.""

God says that both animals and men will be held accountable for the taking of human life. God's image is in all men. It is precious. This is why respect is in order for all people. Consider how we ought to respect people from the cradle to the grave.

- Abortion- there is no place for it if we want God's blessing. Gianna Jessen.
- Care in nursing homes

- Care in prisons
- Care in driving, giving people the right of way
- How we respond to our enemies

IV. The **Reminder** of God's Blessing is the **rainbow** (vs. 8-17).

Let's consider Noah coming off the ark. The great storm was over. The sun finally struggled to shine through the dense clouds As it emerged from the clouds, it is very likely, that this is when the rainbow came into existence. God pointed to the rainbow, and said it would be a sign of mercy between Him and the earth. Every time the rainbow appears, it speaks to mankind of God's forbearance and all-embracing love.

We read in verse 8, “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

As we look at the rainbow, it is important to point out that nature is moral.

Romans 1:18-21, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because **God has shown it to them.** 20 For **his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.** So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened ...”

Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

Psalm 97:6, “The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.”

Psalm 8:3-9, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

Nature is filled with meaning. There are plenty of humble men and women in the world today who know nothing about the scientific account of the rainbow. They cannot tell you how it is caused. They are utterly unaware of the laws of light. But whenever they see the bow in the clouds, it whispers something to them about God's mercy and love.

It is not the scientist who has all is ready to tell you of all the natural laws or the expert in geology or chemistry, who really knows the secret of nature; the man who has learned nature's inmost secret is he who sees in nature everywhere the print and impress of God.

You do not understand man by simply becoming acquainted with the anatomical structure of his body and the chemical constituents of his brain. The anatomist will never with his scalpel discover the soul, and after all it is the soul that makes the man. And there is a sort of soul in nature. The geologist with his hammer, the chemist with his crucible and test tubes and scales, the naturalist with his microscope will never discover it. Like the Sphinx of old, nature denies to them its secret. And those who have not discovered nature's soul can no more claim to know nature than the anatomist who is acquainted with all man's bones and muscles, but has never discovered that man is a living soul, can claim to know man. “Seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not understand.” And just as the man, however ignorant of anatomy he may be, who has come to know that man is a living spirit has a far deeper, truer knowledge of man than the mere anatomist; so the man whose eyes have beheld nature's soul, who gazing, say, upon the bursting beauty of the spring has felt-as Wordsworth felt-

That man has a far more real insight into nature than the mere scientist who can see nothing in nature save certain physical elements acted upon by certain physical forces.

Nature has a message, and the message of nature is God. “In the beginning,” we read, “God created the heavens and the earth” (**Genesis 1:1**). But God did not create nature for scientists to explain Him away. He created it, so that human beings would bow before His Almighty throne in humility and awe.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was 15 years old when she was stricken with an unknown illness that caused her constant pain and made her very frail and weak. This illness made

her draw near to God, and she began studying Greek and Hebrew so that she might know the Bible. She became a famous poet that wrote often of her love for Christ. One of the

*Earth is crammed with heaven,
And every common bush is afire with God.
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.*

Do you see the majesty & mercy of God in creation?

Think of a blade of grass. A scientist explain all about the structure of this simple common plant. He can describe all its parts. He can make our heads swim with words and tell us that grass is a herbaceous plant with narrow leaves growing from its base. But when he has finished we who love God can tell him something about the grass that he has not mentioned. The grass that we mow and our little children run on speaks to us of the love and care of God.

Our Lord Jesus took the grass when he walked on this earth and He made it His text! He said in **Matthew 6:30**, “if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

The love and care of God for us is displayed from the creation to those who believe. The rainbow is this way. It has a spiritual meaning. It is meant to carry our thoughts up to God.

It is the sign and symbol of a promise between you and God and the entire earth. It is suggestive to me of God's mercy and care even in the dark experiences of life. Many a cloud sails across our sky, but in the cloud there is always the rainbow. Let me speak briefly of God's rainbow in the cloud of sin, God's rainbow in the cloud of sorrow, and God's rainbow in the cloud of judgment.

V. The **Rejection** of God's Blessing takes place when we **sin** (vs. 18-27).

Verses 18-23, “The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) 19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. 20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. 21 **He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.** 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.”

Explanation: There is much debate about what happened here. Some people have some strange ideas. Most conservative commentators believe that Ham disrespected and mocked his father's nakedness. Ham mocks and disrespects his father in contrast to what Shem and Japheth do. They respect their father. They fear.

What do we learn?

- A. Believers still **continue** to battle with sin. We see in this sad incident that exposes us to disgrace and becomes the occasion of other sin. Had Noah not been drunk and exposed, his son would not have had opportunity to disrespect him.

Noah, too, was a sinful man. The rainbow was given to reassure Noah's soul. It was a pledge that in wrath God would remember mercy. It was the declaration to Noah that even though sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

And Noah was a man that needed God's continued blessing because of his own sinfulness. Noah became indisposed because of a choice to drink wine in his home.

Application: Clouds of sin still exist in the lives of Christians. Believers still stumble and fall. A struggle against sin in the believer's heart. We have only to look into our own hearts to know it exists.

- B. God **curses** sinful behavior. Sin has serious consequences and can remove the blessing from our family.

Verses 24-27, “When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.” 26 He also said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. 27 May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant”.

Disrespect to parents and authority is truly a disrespect to God. We cannot disrespect and disobey authority and expect the blessing of God. Parents' authority comes from God Himself. And when we cross that authority, and we disrespect, it is displeasing to God, and it will always bring back upon us consequences and sometimes curses. And for every young person, for every student, for every child, son or daughter, we must remember that the converse of the Fifth Commandment is a consequence that we do not want to face.

Sin is no light thing-it is a terrible thing, an awful thing, a deadly thing. It is a monstrous thing! All the world is guilty before God. And God hates sin and is sworn to punish it. But if I had to leave it there, it would be a heartbreaking truth to tell. It would be a message of doom and woe. But I will not leave it there.

- C. Yet Christians still have the promise that where sin abounds, **grace** much more abounds. There is hope! There is a rainbow. God's blessing appears to sinful men! **Remember Rahab was a Canaanite.** Jesus has Canaanite blood in his lineage!

Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance! That rainbow is a

sign of God's blessing and abounding grace to us in Christ.

Conclusion: And so we read in **verses 28-29**, “After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.” Noah died. He was a sinner. There were clouds of sin in his life. It is true that “the wages of sin is death” But we must also remember that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (**Romans 6:23**).

Have you seen the rainbow in the cloud? Some of you right now are under the cloud of sorrow, disappointment, loss, temptation. You feel that there's no forgiveness for your sin or no power over sin. Perhaps you are struggling as to whether God can bless your life.

Every time you see a rainbow it tells us of God's unfailing love and care. God has kept the world from destruction because He wants to redeem you!! Consider God's love despite the clouds of your sin, every time you see that rainbow.