

The Ruin and Hope of Nations

Genesis

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Bible Text: Genesis 6-11

Preached on: Tuesday, September 30, 2014

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I hope you have had a good day today and that your mind is fresh and ready to come to God's word this evening. It's just such a delight to share this time together. A lot of people have told me that you really like having the week broken up this way and having a couple of times to get together and I'm seeing a lot of nodding heads and my head is nodding too and nodding in affirmation, not nodding off to go to sleep. So it's just very sweet to spend this time together and to be with those of you who love God's word enough to arrange your life around it. I'm very grateful for you and I'm very grateful that we can share this kind of time together and I know that it will not be in vain. I know that the Lord will continue to bless us.

One of the things that is just so very important and I say this to encourage you and affirm you in your commitment in being here and being faithful Sunday-after-Sunday, there is no doubt that the true benefit of God's word comes when you are consistently hearing it taught; when you are consistently reading it on your own. I grieve over people who take a hit-and-miss approach to church; they'll be there one Sunday and gone two and there three and gone four. People get to live their lives and make their decisions but there are consequences to that. What God blesses is when we are consistently, faithfully exposing ourselves to his word and, you know, a lot of times and one of the things that I have been seeing and noticing in my own preaching now that we've been at this for almost three years is that it's not that every time that we hear God's word that it's going to be big fireworks going off and it's going to be the most fabulous thing that you've ever heard. That's not what God blesses. Conference speakers can do that. Conference speakers are able to use the same message over and over and they change their audiences but in the church, we have to change our text week-by-week and we just expose ourselves to the breath of God's word and do what we can to expose everyone that comes to our ministry to the whole counsel of God. The benefit of that is faithfully being a part of it and almost every one of you that are in this room manifest that in your lives and it's on the authority of God's word that I can tell you that he's going to bless you for that and the blessing may not be measured in what you see happening in your life week-by-week or even month-by-month, the blessing comes 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 years into it and you find that you've developed a biblical mindset that lets you interpret all of life and there is a stability that comes from

having driven God's word deep, deep into your heart like a skyscraper foundation is driven deep, deep, deep into the ground.

So I just say that all to encourage you and to let you know how thankful I am to have people like you in my life that want to be a part of hearing God's word like that. I'm very, very grateful to the Lord for you and it's with that spirit of gratitude and optimism that we come to God's word tonight in Genesis 6. So if you're not already there, let me invite you to turn there. With that said, to kind of hit a reset button, what we're doing here over these several weeks this fall is we're wanting to take a survey look of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, using all of those terms in a synonymous way. I'm a little bit surprised to find that we're going to be spending 4 or 5 weeks on the book of Genesis but there are just many things that I want to say that I think you need to know and that we need to incorporate into the life of our church. One of the things that I want to do over time is I'd like to find a way to hit at least a little bit of every book in the Bible so that there's some kind of context; so that someone could go to our website a few years down the road and they could find something on every book of the Bible. Whether we're able to do that or not, I don't know, but that's my goal and this is part of what we're doing to achieve that.

The other thing that I would say, there are just so many things that I want to say tonight and I've got double the length of notes that I normally have so I may deliver on that promise to preach for two hours on a Sunday night right here tonight, I don't know. But the other thing that I want to say is that what we're trying to do really with this study of the Pentateuch, this study of Torah, is there are two things that are going on: one is that we want to lay a bit of a foundation for the rest of the Bible so we have a context to understand the Bible. The Torah lays the foundation for the whole rest of the Bible, there is no question about that and if you don't have some kind of basic understanding of Torah, you're going to kind of misinterpret Scripture. The other thing that I want to say and this is more related to life and more related to how we live as Christians in this world, is that I'm hoping that this time will help us develop and further a pattern of biblical thinking and just how is it that we think as a Christian. I'm talking about at a very basic level and this message tonight will help you see what I mean by that.

One of the things about being a Christian and thinking in a biblical way is that when issues come up in life whether they are issues of joy or issues of sorrow, we need to be able to understand how to think about them. When we see troubles in our lives or when we see wars and problems on an international level and every place in between, we have to be able to set those things into context. We should never think about individual issues in our lives in isolation. We should always be connecting our family problems, our family joys, our opportunities, we should always be connecting them back into a greater biblical context so that we'll be thinking about them from the right perspective. That's what we're going to hopefully help us do here this evening.

Genesis 1-11 introduces fundamental themes about God and man that are woven through the rest of the Scriptures and to understand these themes is to grasp the groundwork of world history and more importantly, the Gospel of Christ. When you're thinking about

your individual life, when you're excited or when you're depressed, when you're happy about the state of the world or more likely when you're discouraged about the state of the world, you have to step way, way back and take the wide view, the broad view of what the Bible says about these things. God created the world and placed man in it. We cannot begin to solve any problem of any kind until we start with that fundamental premise that God created the world; God set it into motion; man is a creation of God accountable to him. It all starts and flows from that. And we remember from our studies in Titus and Ephesians more recently on Sunday mornings, we must remember that God has an eternal purpose which he is working out over the course of history. You and I are living in a little sliver of God's eternal purpose and there is no possible way that we can adequately begin to think rightly about life, rightly think about our souls, rightly think about the future, until we have some kind of basic understanding of where we've come from. You must start there. You can't find your way to New York City until you know where you stand on the map. Well, in a similar way, we can't have any idea how we fit into the overall flow of the course of life and the course of history until we start with it from God's perspective, from a biblical perspective.

So you start there. You start mentally. Your whole framework of life thinking starts in Genesis 1 and in Genesis 2. But there is more to it than that. Our expectations are framed by the fact that man, that is the entire human race, that is individually and collectively, that is citizens and all nations, have rebelled against their Creator. God has created man and man has rebelled against him and so it is no wonder, it is no surprise that we see disorder and chaos all around us. It is no surprise, it is no wonder that we see generations of people thinking badly, people that are acting irrationally. People act irrationally because there is an evil irrational force that is in their heart that causes them not to act in accordance with God's word, not to act in accordance with what's their best interest. They are dominated by evil desires and so it's no wonder that we see filth and war and violence and all kinds of other immorality all about us. It shouldn't surprise us. We understand the source because we've paid attention to the first few chapters of Genesis. But if you just stopped there as some thinkers do, you would be left in an entirely wrong position as you're thinking about life. That would leave you in a sense of despair. It would leave you discouraged. It's because people stop their thinking there that they start to say things like, "What kind of world is going to be left behind to my children and to my grandchildren?" Now admittedly, I think that way but if you're saying that totally from a sense of despair that, "It's bad. It's not as good as it was when I was a kid. It's bad and it's getting worse," and you start to wring your hands and say, "Oh, what am I going to do? What's going to happen?" then you have slid out of a biblical mindset and you're starting to drop down into a way that leaves God out of the equation. You see, even as we acknowledge the sinfulness of the world around us, we acknowledge the fact that man cannot save himself. We acknowledge what Scripture says that evil men will proceed from bad to worse.

There is another aspect that we have to remember and this survey of Genesis is helping us to remember that. It's laying the groundwork for us to really have something to stand on. When you read the opening chapters of Genesis, what you find is not only of the creation of man and the sin of man but you see that God has intervened. God has intervened periodically. He has established the fact that he intervenes in judgment and that he also

intervenes in grace. Those of you who are Christians here tonight, your testimony is a reflection of a greater reality about the nature of God. You were a rebel. You came to a point where you understood that you were under the judgment of God and it introduced a fear of God into your heart that says, "I'm in trouble. I need a Savior." And somewhere along the line, someone brought the Gospel to you and you realized that God is gracious to sinners who repent and put their faith in Christ and that changed you. You put your faith in Christ and you experienced grace from God. He released you from some of your sinful ways, some of your sinful habits. Some of you found as I did that you were just instantly changed in a way that freed you from some prior dominating effect of sin in your life. That's God intervening in grace. It's a particular individual application where he has done for you what is described that he did in the Bible. You found that your conscience was cleansed. Your sense of guilt was relieved because you understood that Christ bore your guilt on Calvary and carried it so far away that the Bible can rightly say that he has separated you from your sins as far as the east is from the west, Psalm 103:12. Praise God for the grace of God in salvation.

So God created man. Man rebelled. God intervenes in judgment. God intervenes also in grace even in the midst of his judgment. We saw this last time as we looked at Adam and as we looked at the individual man Cain. Adam sinned as you know, and God intervened in judgment and cast them out of Eden. But at the same time, he intervened in grace and promised that there would be a seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. God intervened in grace and gave them animal skins to cover them in their shame. So there was judgment and there was yet grace as God intervened in the sinful ways of man. With Cain, we saw that Cain rebelled and killed his brother Abel and God judged him and said, "You will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." Cain cried out, "My punishment is too great to bear," and God intervened in grace and said, "I'll give you a mark so that you will not be slain on your way." Judgment and grace. Judgment and grace. What I want you to see which you might miss if you just casually read through the first few chapters of Genesis is that those stories are not isolated and unrelated to one another. In the narrative, it is teaching us about the nature and the ways of God. He is a righteous holy God who does not tolerate sin and yet he is also a God of grace in the midst of his judgment as well. And so we are learning about God; we are learning about the nature of the way that he interacts with the human race.

So almost every one of you in this room would say, "God is sovereign. God rules over all," and that's true. Well, make the next connection in your mental approach to life to understand that you can never judge things in this life correctly unless you put everything into that bigger context of what we've been just describing. You cannot judge anything in life be it personal sorrow or personal joy, you cannot judge the affairs of nations and the rise and fall of world leaders by present appearances. You see, the Gospel calls us not only to faith in Christ but the Gospel also calls us to a whole renewed way of thinking about life; a whole way of interpreting the world around us. This book determines the way that we think and so it's not just that God has forgiven us our sins, he's done that, praise God, we're going to heaven as a result of the faithful work of Christ on our behalf, but during the period of time that we live here, we are to cultivate a biblical mindset that interprets what's happening in our lives and in the world around us through this prism of

the nature of God, man's rebellion and how God intervenes in judgment and in grace. We have never seen the end of the story in this life. We don't know the outcome of our difficulties and so we have to learn to interpret them by the nature of God. And the themes of the Bible that start in the Torah are what give us the ability to do that.

So we've seen the themes of sin, judgment and grace in the lives of men: Adam and Cain. Now watch this, I think this is pretty cool: we begin now in Genesis 6 is where we're going to pick up where you see the same themes repeated but what we're going to see in Genesis 6 through 11 tonight is that God is operating in the same way as he deals with the human race as he deals with nations, as he did in the individuals that we saw beforehand. That helps us understand that we should think about our salvation, we should think about the Scriptures, in a broader sense than just how it impacts us personally. Scriptures are more than that which gives us a devotional text to give us a bump that helps us get through our day. No, it's so much more than that. We are intended to become mature in our thinking and have a maturity informed by Scripture that lets us understand and think rightly about the entire world. Scripture lays claim to the entire course of world history, not just what's happening in your individual life and so that's the mindset that we're moving toward and you don't acquire that, to kind of tie this up to what I opened up with, but to tie it into what we were saying earlier, is that look, and this is why it's so important what you're doing by being here, being here with us on Sunday, is so very, very important: you don't develop that kind of worldview, that kind of mindset, in one or two sermons where the pastor is just particularly on fire one Sunday and all of a sudden you've cultivated an entire biblical worldview. It doesn't work that way. This is something that is built over time and those of you that are faithfully participating in the teaching and reading of God's word, that's what God is building into you. Not just your personal sanctification but a mind that is able to properly think and that's cool and I'm grateful to the Lord that I see you growing in that and what we're going to do tonight will hopefully continue us all down that road.

Now, finally turning actually to Genesis 6. By the time you get to Genesis 6, what you see is that spiritual corruption has taken such root in the human race that it has irretrievably spread throughout all of humanity, that what we saw introduced in Adam and in Cain and Lamech, we didn't really talk about him last time. That's alright, we've got to pick and choose here. But the evil that was in the heart of Cain, the murderous attitudes and the arrogance that was in his heart was not an example that one man had gone bad, it was a symptom of a greater problem spread throughout the entire race of humanity and that is so essential for us to see and that's what we're going to find. We're going to look at two events now. We looked at Adam and Cain last week. We're going to look at two events now here this evening. We're going to look at the flood and we're going to look at the Tower of Babel. The flood and the Tower of Babel.

We'll start there with the flood. Again, I'm grateful for the work of our friends at Answers in Genesis who have taught us so much about this. I'm not going to pretend to replicate what they have done here. We're going to take perhaps a different perspective in terms of focusing on the theological issues as opposed to some of the other issues that could be discussed about the biblical text on the flood. What you're going to see in these

two different events is that in the flood and in the Tower of Babel, we're going to see the same pattern, the same themes happening: the sin of man; the judgment of God; and the grace of God. We're going to see those same things being replicated as we go through this text and it's those common themes that I want you to see. What I want you to see is how the Tower of Babel and the flood and Cain and Abel are all connected together. Not what distinguishes them but what gives them a commonality in the biblical narrative and that's what we're going to do as we turn to the flood and we see first of all: the sin of man. In Genesis 6, we see the corrupting influence of sin. Look at Genesis 6:1-4, a difficult text and we're not going to do justice to the interpretive issues that are in it but we want to at least lay it out there with a little bit of understanding hopefully. Genesis 6:1, "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.' The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

Now, there are a few different ways to understand this strange union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. Some people believe that the sons of God refer to the godly line of Seth marrying unbelievers and that that corrupted what was intended to be the godly line. Some people believe that that is the proper understanding of that, however, I personally prefer the view that sees this as fallen angels cohabiting with women and corrupting the entire human race. If you look at Scripture passages in Job and 2 Peter and Jude and you allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, it seems that fallen angels were transgressing their domain and in some way were corrupting the human race as described in this passage. Scripture doesn't give us a lot of detail. There are good men on either side that see it in different ways but the point of the passage here is that humanity is being corrupted. Somehow the nature of man, the people who were dwelling on earth were being corrupted and you see that in verse 5 and this is the main thing that you really need to see. It's easy to get distracted into these interesting interpretive issues and lose sight of where the biblical narrative is actually going and the biblical narrative here, what is being set up, is described in verse 5 where it says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Notice that what you have here is a description of thorough going corruption that could not be resolved. The wickedness was great and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil and was only evil continually. There is a total corruption of the human race so much so that judgment needed to come once again.

Look at verses 6 and 7 now, "The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.'" This is the motivation of God's judgment and here's what I want you to see: that in only four chapters since the garden of Eden, 3, 4, 5 and 6, here we are in the fourth chapter since the garden of Eden and there is such pervasive, deep, broad, extensive evil and corruption in the human race that God

determines that his only option is to destroy the entire race of man. This is a big problem. This is no superficial, external matter. You know, you could look at Cain's murder of Abel and think that, "Well, this is an external problem. He lost self-control and he struck his brother and the blood cried out from the ground, crying out for justice." Well, what I want you to see here, what is so essential for you to grasp as you're looking at this is that even in Genesis 6, the Bible is placing the root of sin right in the midst of the human heart and the whole matter of the human mind was so corrupt that nothing good could possibly have come out of it. Their thoughts were evil and they were only evil and they were only evil continually. There is just a piling up of the utter pervasive hopelessness of the mind of man and that there was no hope anywhere. Every man was like this. The totality of the human race was absolutely irredeemable. That's the sin of man described in the passage. Here's where I would really want to draw you into what we're talking about here: we're no longer looking at one man like Cain and saying, "That was really bad. He was naughty. Shame on him," and we view it from a little bit of a sense of a perspective of self-righteousness maybe. "Cain was bad." Well, what Scripture is saying is that the whole human race was bad. The whole human race was corrupt and it places it in a realm of the heart. Sin starts in the heart and that passage that we just read recognizes the root of it, that the whole nature was bad. The inward man was so defiled and corrupt that only judgment could be an appropriate response to it.

Look at verses 11 and 12 which I believe that I read earlier. "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." So as much as we've introduced our little children to toys of arks and animals and all of that and that's kind of a fun thing to play with, we as adults have to recognize that the whole point of the ark and the flood was judgment on a hopelessly wicked humanity. That was the sin of man that we see prompting the flood here in the account of Genesis and so as we move on now to the judgment of God, we've seen the sin of man and now we move into the judgment of God, you see that once again his righteousness moved him to judge the race, to judge humanity. You know, here is one of the defining aspects, if we think rightly about this, this is really going to help us think rightly in our developing a biblical worldview that God is so pristine in his holiness; he is so perfect in his righteousness that evil cannot dwell with him. He cannot tolerate it. He will not permit it to go unchecked forever. That's what we see being displayed here in Genesis 6 but this time he's dealing with all of humanity, not merely an individual like Cain.

So he declares his intention to bring total destruction on the earth. Look at verse 13, "Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.'" Then in verse 17 he says, "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish." Notice how God emphasizes that, "I, even I am doing this." This is a personal judgment from a personal, holy God. It's not that there was suddenly a random weather occurrence, a random geological occurrence that disrupted everything, God forced these things to happen. God brought these things to pass as

judgment on the continual wickedness of the human race that was under his nostrils and he could no longer tolerate it.

Well, you know the outcome, don't you of what happened? Let's go to Genesis 7:10 just for the sake of reminding you of texts that I know are familiar to you. "It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month," and we're passing over the building of the ark, I understand that, for the sake of time. I'm assuming you know all of that. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month," you love the precise chronology, "on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights." Drop down to verse 17, "Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days."

Look, some people try to minimize the biblical account and say that this was only a local flood. That's not true. That's absolutely incorrect and no serious deferential mind submitted to the Scriptures would think that it was. We're not going to play games and try to harmonize this with what secular people would find acceptable and you and I can understand why the flood had to be universal just from the text. Look: the flood was judgment on humanity. Humanity was being judged because it was corrupt. Here's the key: the corruption of humanity was universal. All men everywhere, all of their thoughts were only evil continually. All of them descended from fallen Adam and, therefore, because the corruption was universal, the flood of judgment had to be universal as well and all the mountains everywhere were covered under the heaven, all flesh in the earth and all mankind perished. It is a travesty of biblical interpretation to try to minimize that to please people who don't believe in God in the first place. Why would you sacrifice that level of biblical authority, biblical proclamation? Why would you sacrifice the biblical text at the altar of satisfying people who are opposed to the very thing that we hold most dear? That's crazy. That's lunacy in biblical interpretation motivated not by the clear words of the text but by other considerations that are imported into the text. We reject that without apology. One commentator named John Davis says this and kind of rounding out the discussion about sin and judgment here. He says and I quote, "The nature and extent of God's judicial acts always reflect the seriousness of the sin which is being judged and with the exception of Noah's family, the flood destroyed all of human life. God clearly considered the sins of the antediluvian race so wicked that nothing short of near total destruction would satisfy his holy demands." In other words, what he's saying

is: you can measure how bad the corruption was by how bad the judgment was that was brought on it. The severity of the judgment shows how bad the severity of the evil was.

So to think that God wiped out the entire human race and destroyed the entire world with a worldwide flood because of this evil sin, gives you a sense of how rottenly wicked it all was. There are a couple of things that that should do to us: it should really humble us. It should sober us to be mindful of the fact that the severity of the judgment of God pointing to the depth of the depravity and wickedness of man and all of a sudden, we realize, we're mindful of the fact that we're not playing games here. You know, if there was one thing that I could stop in the church, broadly speaking, not our church, is this love of entertainment and trying to make sinners feel comfortable in the presence of the church and giving them the kind of music and videos and all of that stuff that they're already used to. All that does is condition people to think that this isn't so serious after all. You do a terrible disservice to the eternal souls of men who need to learn to fear God because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and when you bring them in and entertain them and give them their favorite cup of java, you're not teaching them to fear God. Well look, just read the first seven chapters of the Bible and you realize this God is serious. He's a God of judgment. He's a God of righteousness. He's a God of holiness and I belong to a corrupt human race that has rebelled against him. I understand from personal experience that when you preach that way, people will peel off but you don't shave off the edges of God's righteousness and judgment in order to keep people inside the walls of the church. That's unfaithful to God and that's unfaithful to your audience. That's no way to minister to people. That's no way to proclaim the Gospel is to condition them to think that, "Hey, it's really not all that bad after all and let's just deal with your human problems and let me tell you how to make your marriage a little bit better." The judgment that will be on the men who introduce those philosophies into the church is going to be a fearsome thing and all I want to do is stay as far away from that as I possibly can. We have an obligation to a holy God to be faithful to his word. We have an obligation to God's people to help them understand his word so that they can grow in the grace and knowledge and Christ. And we have an obligation to sinners everywhere to warn them that God is a God to be feared and that he is a God of righteous judgment and you're part of the problem of a corrupt human race. We've got to tell people that or we're not being faithful. I'm glad to be with a group of people like you that share those convictions. It's precious to me to know that you believe that too, that that's what you want too. That's why you're here. That's why you stay. I just want you to see that regardless of how it's received outside the walls, we're doing the right thing by preaching God's word, by being committed to that corporately together. It's the only thing that we can do.

Now, part of the reason that you do that is so that you can set a proper context to introduce people to the grace of God. Grace doesn't mean much if judgment isn't serious. Judgment doesn't mean much if sin isn't serious but if sin is serious and God's holiness is serious and God's judgment is serious, then the grace that relieves that judgment from us becomes very special. It becomes very sweet and wonderful to us and we see the grace of God even in this account of the flood. These recurrent themes of sin, judgment and grace are replicated in the account of the flood as well. Look at Genesis 6:8. God had just

declared universal judgment, rightly so, on every intent of the evil thoughts of men everywhere continually. Verse 8 slipped in like a sweet honey lozenge on a scratchy sore-throat. "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD." That's nothing but pure, pure grace. And God initiated promises to this man named Noah that Noah could never have demanded, never could have expected. God on his own initiative promised unmerited favor to Noah and to his progeny. Look at verse 18. In the midst of all this judgment, God says in verse 18, "I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you." He goes on and in verse 19, "And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female." God says, "I'll enter into a covenant with you." God starts to make unconditional promises to Noah and God gives Noah a means of living through this judgment as he gives him the plans for the ark. Look at chapter 7:6, "Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood." The ark was their instrument of salvation that carried them through. The ark was a means of God's grace to them. God kept his promise and brought them relief. He preserved them and used them to re-establish the created order. Look at Genesis 8:1, "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided." God remembered him. Now look: this means more than an act of mental memory. It's not like God was saying, "What was I doing?...oh yeah, Noah. Yeah, I remember." His mind isn't like that and what we do is not what we should attribute to God in this passage. When it says that God remembered Noah, it means that God in his faithful love intervened on Noah's behalf in the midst of the judgment. He even established a covenant not to destroy the world with water again, so great was his faithful love to Noah.

Now look at chapter 9, verse 11 here and we see a little bit about the covenant and notice how much this is at God's initiative. This isn't Noah earning this. This is a unilateral covenant, a gift from God, a gift of God's grace, that he established with Noah. Verse 8, "Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 'Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.'" Verse 11, "I establish My covenant with you." He's promising something that he was under no external obligation to do. Just like God was under no external obligation to save you in your sins, so here under no external obligation, motivated only by the goodness of his perfect grace, he enters into this covenant and establishes it. Verse 11, "I establish my covenant with you and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." By the way, there's another indication that the flood had to be universal. We have all kinds of local floods, don't we? There are all kinds of local floods around the world on an ongoing basis. It's not because God forgot this covenant that he made in Genesis 9, it's because he's talking about a universal flood he would never do again.

Verse 12, "God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.'" Verse 16, I realize it's a longer text, "'When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' And God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.'" He says, "I'll never do this again." Not because it would be wrong for him to do that but as an act of his grace. As they stepped out of the ark, he makes promises and then he says, "This will never happen again by water," and you see the goodness, the kindness of God to undeserving creatures making promises which he was under no obligation to make and saying, "Let me make a promise to you." "Really, God? Really? You would make a promise on your own initiative that I am not worthy of? Really, God? In the Gospel of Jesus Christ you promised me the forgiveness of sins? You call me. You offer me. You promise that if I come to you that you will give me rest. Really? You promise that you'll forgive my sins? That you'll wipe my slate clean? That you'll impute the very righteousness of Christ to my account so that I can have bold and confident access to you? Really, God? I don't deserve that." Precisely. Precisely. You see, God is unveiling in the covenant with Noah this aspect of his undeserved favor, these promises of his grace. What I want you to see is that this is a foretaste of grace that's going to be manifested more fully when Christ comes. Christ comes in the Gospel. When Christ forgives us of our sins and we promise eternal life based on the authority of Scriptures to every sinner who will repent and believe, that that unfathomable, wonderful goodness and grace of God to undeserving people is simply the full fruition of that which was being shown early on in the book of Genesis. He's a wonderful, wonderful God.

Now, that's the flood. You would think that such favor to have brought a small group through such universal judgment and then bringing them out and giving them promises that they would never have to go through that again, you would think perhaps that such a change of direction in man that there would be a gratitude in response that would change the course and there wouldn't be this return of corruption that caused the judgment in the first place. You would think that but that's not what happened. You see, the flood destroyed sinful men. What it did not do, it did not destroy their sinful nature and the corrupt seed in the heart grew back and we see that in the Tower of Babel. We come now to the final cycle of sin, judgment and grace in Genesis 1-11. We need to set a couple of brief verses of context first. We'll try to go through this more quickly although admittedly I'm only halfway through my notes. We really are on a pace for two hours tonight but I don't think it will go that long. My voice won't hold out that long.

As part of God's creation ordinance, he commanded man to multiply and fill the earth. Go back to Genesis 1:28 and we need to go a little more quickly here. You say, "Hey, I'm not the one slowing it down. That's you, Pastor." Okay, I accept responsibility. Genesis 1:28, in creation, "God blessed man; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and

fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." He says, "Multiply and fill the earth. Spread out," in other words. Well, he repeated similar instruction to Noah and his sons in chapter 9:1, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'" And so there is this obligation on humanity to spread out, to fill the earth, that's what God wanted. He wanted man to be spread out over the earth and to exercise the dominion that he had been assigned to rule and all of that plays into what we're about to see as once more in a cycle that would almost get wearisome because of its repetitive nature, you see the sin of man.

In this final cycle here in Genesis 1-11, we find man rebelling against that command to multiply and fill the earth. Look at Genesis 11:1, "Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.' And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, 'Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'" Are you kidding me? Not again. Not again. Adam, don't eat from the fruit of the tree. Chomp. Cain, sin is crouching at your door. Thump. Noah, surrounded by a corrupt human race and here again you see the wearisome corruption and sin of men saying, "Let's not do what God said we should do."

Well, as we've come to expect, God does not treat rebellion against him lightly. As we've come to expect, God intervenes in judgment, the judgment of God here. God brought judgment on the nations by confusing their languages so that they would be forced to separate. Look at verse 5, "The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. The LORD said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth." They had to scatter because they could no longer talk to one another. God somehow supernaturally split the languages. They had one language and suddenly multiple languages were imposed upon them which prevented them from carrying out their sinful rebellion against God. Their plans for a unifying structure were frustrated by a supernatural act of God's judgment. Incidentally, that gives you a beautiful perspective on how wonderful Pentecost is in Acts 2 when all of a sudden the nations are gathered together and the apostles and their associates are speaking in different tongues; they are speaking in languages that they did not know so that the Gospel could be heard by these people in their own language. What God did in judgment in Genesis 11 he starts to reverse in Acts 2 through the proclamation of the Gospel. People gathered in one place with different languages suddenly are hearing it all and having understanding.

Going back to Genesis 11, the cycle of sin, judgment and grace leads you to expect another act of grace here for the careful reader. Adam got his animal skins. Cain got a mark. Noah had the covenant of the rainbow. It's just so sweet to see God showing favor to those who had obviously forfeited any favor whatsoever, any claim on God utterly forfeited. Bankrupt before him like every sinner. Spiritually bankrupt. All we could do was cry out for mercy. So you're expecting another sign of grace in the text now. Adam got his skins. Cain got some kind of token sign. Noah got a rainbow. But what comes next now in the text is something totally unexpected. You go to verse 10 and you get this, this is the grace of God for the sake of your notes, but this is not what you expect at all. Verse 10, "These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters." What? Why are we talking about this? What does this have to do with anything? What does this have to do with the judgment on another aspect of the corrupt human race? Why are you telling me about these generations? The cycle has been broken and now we're talking about something unrelated? Probably not. But instead of an outward expression of grace, Moses provides the genealogy of Shem and you say, "Where is this going? Doesn't that seem strange?"

And Moses traces the genealogy down to a man named Terah and his children, specifically a son named Abram. Look at verse 26, I think this is so cool, "Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot." And if you're reading through your Bible plan, your annual, yearly Bible plan, this is where you start to nod off. Don't not off tonight because the totality in the foundation is being laid here for a spectacular display of grace that goes so far beyond what Noah, Cain and Adam saw combined together. Don't nod off here. This is really important. Verse 28, "Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves." On it goes, verse 30, "Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran."

That's almost weird. Almost. What on earth does that genealogy have to do with the clearly established cycle of sin, judgment and grace that we have come to expect in our reading of the text? Why is that there? How does that help? How does this display that God had shown grace when he judged the nations? Did Moses just suddenly take a weird turn of interest into genealogies in tracing the ancestral tree? No. Where do we get relief from this wearying repetition of man's rebellion and ruin? Well, you see the 12 there in your text there, right? Chapter 12? That's really unfortunate. I talked about this two weeks ago on Sunday. If it weren't for a chapter break inserted by someone 2,500 years later, the connection might be clearer to us. Chapter 12 isn't starting a whole brand-new line of thought, chapter 12 is the culmination, it's the beginning of the culmination of the ultimate expression of the grace of God. The pattern that Moses had set is being continued, not broken here. And here's the beauty of it: God is showing that it's no longer

going to be grace through an outward token like an animal skin, like the mark given to Cain, like a rainbow in the sky as marvelous and as wonderful as those things may be. What God is now doing, having judged all of the world in the flood, having judged the nations and ruined the intent of the nations by his sovereign might, now God is introducing a great next step in the unfolding of grace. Grace would no longer be through an outward token; God would now provide blessing through a human channel.

Look at chapter 12, verse 1, understanding that this is a continuation of the text, not a new episode that changes the direction. The whole text of Genesis is going in the same direction. Moses didn't take a detour. He didn't suddenly turn left or turn right, he's going straight ahead. He's continuing the pattern and when you remember that God had judged the nations, he had judged the world so mightily in chapters 6 through 11, now this makes some sense. Chapter 12, verse 1, "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing.'" This is, again, unmerited grace. Abram couldn't have demanded this from God. Abram didn't earn this from God. God chose Abram to give this favor to him. You say, "Well, good for Abram. What's that got to do with the nations and their judgment?" Look at this, this is incredible. This is magnificent. This buckles the knees. Verse 3, "I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." In the flood, he judged the whole earth. At Babel, he judged the nations. Now he is saying, "I'm introducing something that is going to bring blessing to all the families of the earth."

This must be really good and we'll look at it next time, and it sets the context for the rest of the Bible; it sets the context for the Gospel. Let me just remind you of what we looked at. One little thing, just to kind of whet your appetite and encourage you to be back next week. Matthew 1:1, you don't have to turn there, I know how hard it is to find the New Testament. "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Hallelujah! Here we see Jesus Christ being the fulfillment of that promise that Jesus would be the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled, in Jesus Christ, our wonderful, lovely, Lord and Savior. Here we find the one who would be the blessing to all the families of the earth. It's a direct connection. Christ is the fulfillment of this gracious promise and at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, after his redemptive death, after his glorious resurrection, Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of," what? Tell me. "All the nations." Genesis 12 start us on a path that leads us to Christ and that is the greatest grace of them all. Praise be to God.

The genealogy is no interruption into the flow, it's leading us to that which ultimately leads us to Christ and in Christ, perfect grace is on display. In Christ, your judgment is satisfied. In Christ, all of the rivers of grace are promised and poured out upon you starting here at your conversion and flowing on through all of eternity, never to cease. That's what Genesis 12 starts. How great is this grace that saves us? We'll look at Abraham next time. Thank you for your patience.

Bow with me in prayer.

The vital question is: do you believe the Gospel? Do you believe in this Christ, for it is in Christ now where the grace of God is found. Oh, brother, oh sister in Christ, if you know Christ, rejoice and magnify God for the grace that he has shown to you and recognize that this grace that you know, that this grace that has transformed your life, that this grace that gives you hope, is perfectly consistent with the character of God displayed from the beginning of creation. He is good to us when we don't deserve it and, Lord Jesus, we love you for it. Your life blood was the redemption price for our grace. We are sorry for our sins. We confess that we have committed sins today of thought, word or deed. Our Father, we know that apart from grace, just today would be adequate for our eternal judgment and yet we have seen your grace on display through the pages of your word which you revealed through your servant Moses.

We thank you, Father, and I pray for each one here. Some of us at the end of a hard, difficult, discouraging day. Father, may the bright, warm light of your grace encourage us and sustain us and give a bounce to our steps as we leave this place. We rejoice not in our goodness but in yours. We rejoice not in our obedience but in the obedience of Christ on our behalf. We thank you that we no longer have a terrifying expectation of judgment because in Christ we have been covered, in Christ we have been redeemed, in Christ we have brought been brought into your family, adopted into the family of God for the purpose that you could bless us forever. O God, we have just begun to taste your grace and the taste is so good right now. It's hard to imagine it being better. But Lord, we believe your promise that there is a consummation yet to come that will be even better which tongue could not describe, which human language could not give justice to here in this life, that great redemption, that great consummation in the unhindered presence of your great Shekinah glory, our home, graciously shared by you with us.

Lord, we'll look forward to the day when we magnify your grace even more. For now, accept our praise and reassure our hearts, those of us that know you, that you have indeed irrevocably set your grace upon us for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Christ didn't come to give us a partial salvation that we could fritter away with our own disobedience. Lord Jesus, you died to save us completely and it is finished and we are secured through your grace. Thank you for carrying us through, as it were, the judgment of God and landing us safe on Canaan's shore. We are grateful and we thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

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