



The Sermon

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Genesis 9:1-7

"The New World Symphony"

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TRANSCRIPT

Genesis 9:1-7, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 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. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. 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 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. 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, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.'" That's the reading of the word of the living God. Let's pray and ask for His help.

[Prayer] Our Father, we do praise You this morning for Your evident grace amongst us, Your rich blessing on this local church. Father, we thank You this morning for the gift of the gospel. By Your grace You sent Your Son to live a perfect life amongst us, to die a criminal's death, to rise again after three days from the grave, so that when we put our faith in Him as our Savior, our sins are forgiven. We praise You this morning that, more than that, we're credited with His righteousness, so that we come here as brothers and sisters in Christ, accepted by You, declared to be righteous. We praise You that You call us into fellowship, so as to worship You together, and that we do that through Your Word, that You've given us Your Word by

which we can know You, by which our hearts can be instructed, and by which we can worship You.

Father, we ask now as we give our attention to Your Word that You would guide our hearts, soften our hearts to receive the truth. Guide my words, Lord, so that Your work would be done amongst us. You know all it is that we bring here this morning. You know the details of our lives, You know the burdens that we carry, You know the problems that we bring here this morning. You know our grief, You know our joy. Father, you know our sin; and our desire is that You would be honored through salvation and through sanctification. Please do Your work in our lives this morning through Your Word, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 is perhaps his most famous piece. Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 is maybe his most famous piece, and you would know it not by a number, but by the more commonly given title "The New World Symphony." Dvorak's New World Symphony is perhaps his most famous piece, and in fact, one of the most famous symphonies ever written. If you were in the UK during the '90s, one of the melodies in the symphony was used as part of a commercial for bread; and so everyone back home knows it as the bread melody. If you don't know of the tune by its name, just look it up later today, and I promise you you'll recognize it, Dvorak's New World Symphony.

The history of the piece is interesting. As you research why it was Dvorak wrote it or what he had in his mind, it turns out it came off the back of a visit to America. He visited and spent some time here, and he discovered, in many senses, a new world, a new world to that which he was used to. And one thing that intrigued him and that he particularly enjoyed were the melodies that he discovered amongst the Native Americans. And so what he tried to do was to use those melodic patterns and to incorporate them into this symphony. And the New World Symphony, when you listen to it, is certainly a piece that communicates a notion of joy, of celebration, even of triumph. There are very celebratory or triumphant melodies throughout the symphony.

At the same time, it's worth remembering that Dvorak's New World Symphony is written in the key of E minor. It's a very joyful piece, and yet it comes in the form of a minor key; and as you listen to it, there are other melodies intertwined with the joyful ones that are melancholy. There are melodies within the symphony that are sad and speak of a longing. And again, the history of the piece is interesting, because Dvorak was writing about his experiences in America, and at the same time while he was here, it's told that he felt very homesick. He longed to be back with his people; he longed to be back in the place that he had come from. And that's reflected in the music. It's very joyful and triumphant and celebratory, and then at the same time, there are these sad, pining melodies intertwined.

Now I tell you that because I would say, in a sense, Genesis 9:1-7 is Moses' new world symphony. It's his new world symphony as he portrays to us a new world. The waters of the flood subside, and Noah steps forth with his family cast very much in the likeness of Adam, and he's entering into this new world. And in this text there's undoubtedly notes of triumph or of hope. There is a clear expression of God's commitment to persist with humanity. And that should cause us to rejoice, the fact that the judgment, the act of judgment that was the flood was not terminal. God didn't say, "I'm done with you forever," but actually, "I'll preserve a family, and through this family we'll start again," should be a cause of great celebration and praise and rejoicing for us this morning.

And then at the same time within our text we see echoes, reminders that this new world is not the way we would like it to be. Noah steps forth, and God commits to keep working with him and with humanity, and at the same time He says, "And sin is still around. I wiped the slate clean through the flood, we're starting over again, and yet sin persists." And within this text we're reminded of the brokenness now of the world in which we live. The flood couldn't deal with sin, and so problems prevail, and God reminds Noah of that at this point of a new beginning in the book of Genesis.

So the holistic picture, as we look at just these seven verses, is one of both hope and of despair, one of both blessing and of prevailing curses. It's a mixed image; we see both of those themes juxtaposed against one another.

And if we were to step back and to look at the picture of this new world honestly, if we're to think about how it is that this text comes to us and the reality of sin that we see around us, there is no ultimate solution found here. The covenant that God makes with Noah is not the final word in God's redemptive plan. If we're to deal honestly with the fact that though God persists with us by His grace, yet there is sin, we look for a final solution; and the Noahic covenant is one that should rightly, eventually drive us to Christ.

The text this morning is one that teaches us of God's grace in persisting with us, the reality of sin in the world around us, and an exhortation to flee to Christ. That is the message of this text; and as we think about its structure, it's difficult to divide, because the themes of hope and despair are very much intermixed with each other. It's a difficult passage to break up; though if we were, I would say we could spend some time just looking at the first verse, the first verse. And in this I want to focus on particularly the man Noah, and then we'll spend the second half of the time looking at the remainder, where we'll look at the reality of the world in which he inhabits. So first of all, the man Noah, and then the world in which he lives, through which we see the themes of hope and despair, and they work together so as to drive us to Christ.

Let's begin then by looking at the man Noah. We see that God blessed him, verse 1: God blessed Noah and his sons and He said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.'" Now just think about the display of God's grace with which we're met immediately. The flood waters have subsided. The last thing that we read of humanity prior to the flood was that the meditations of their heart were only ever evil continuously. Sin had gotten so bad that God regretted having created this species. It's a desperate situation back in Genesis chapter 6, and so God rightly and justly judges the earth. He floods the whole earth. That was the last thing that we read of humanity, and now as the flood waters subside, we read, "God blessed Noah."

That is God's grace on display, that is His faithfulness. "You have not been faithful towards Me, but I will be faithful towards. You have not been steadfast in your disposition towards Me, but I will be steadfast in My

goodness to you." And God says, "This is My blessing: be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." So these aren't two separate thoughts, they're one thought. God blessed Noah, and the content of the blessing is, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth."

As you read those words of blessing, it might be that you're sat here thinking, "Haven't we heard this before"; and you're exactly right. Now I know that you guys are now experts in Genesis, you've been here for some time, and you're going to be here for some time more. You're only in chapter 9, there's a few more chapters to go. But by way of reminder, the meaning in the book of Genesis of the text is often borne out by virtue of repetition. The way in which Old Testament narrative works, and especially the book of Genesis, is often by virtue of repetition.

So here's what I mean. If you sit down and read all of Genesis in one sitting there's going to be a number of occasions in that reading where you sit there and say, "Feels like we've been here before." That's exactly the point. The way Genesis is constructed is that it's a very repetitious narrative. Things happen that look very similar to previous events. That's not an accident. It's not an indication of an overly simplistic story, it's a very complex story. But the way in which the ancient mind, the Israelite mind would tell story and create meaning is by virtue of repeating things. And every time you come across a repetition, it is an invitation to you to compare and contrast.

The way I teach it to my students, I say, "Think about the – spot the difference, things that you give your kids. Two pictures, they look the same, but there are subtle differences. Look to look at the differences." It's the same in Genesis. Very soon in the book of Genesis you're going to read three times a patriarch telling a foreign king, "She's not my wife, she's my sister," three times. That's an invitation to compare the three narratives. You compare and contrast; there'll be some similarities, there'll be some subtle differences. It's often in the differences that the meaning of the text arises, that's the way Genesis works. So here we read some words that have come up before, and you know they came up at the very beginning in Genesis chapter 1 as God gave His mandate to Adam.

Now let's just step back a bit, and I'm sure you guys have talked about this, but the whole flood narrative is actually written in the form of a new creative work. So just think about it with me on a big picture level. Sin has gotten really bad; God judges the earth, He covers the earth with water, and the picture is one of chaos. The earth is covered with water. After a time, the waters subside, dry land emerges, and from there a man steps forth.

The way that the flood narrative has been written and presented to us is intentionally as a new creative act. The flood narrative reads very much according to the logic of Genesis chapter 1. The earth is covered with the waters, a wind comes, the waters subside and dry land emerges, and a man steps forth. This is a new creative act, God is starting a new world, and from the ark the man that steps forth is Noah, who is presented to us in the likeness of Adam. You can think of Noah as a new Adam, he is the head of this new humanity. And so it stands to reason that God gives him the same instruction that He gave to Adam: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth."

So let's just think about the similarities. Number One: "God was gracious enough to not end the story with the flood, but He was gracious enough to preserve one family and to start over again in the same way that He started with Adam." God is gracious to not say, "I'm done." He didn't need us, and we deserved to have the story finished at the point of the flood; and yet in His goodness He keeps going, and He says, "I'm going to persist with you," to Noah.

Let's think about the content of the blessing: "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." Back in Genesis chapter one that comes immediately after the declaration that Adam is an image-bearer. And in fact, in our text today we'll get to the concept of being the image-bearer in verse 6. It's actually a very kingly blessing. When God says in Genesis chapter 1, "You're My image-bearer," what He's saying is, "You're My representative." To be an image-bearer in the ancient Near East was to be a kingly representative. The image-bearer was always the king, and the king was the representative on earth of his God, and Moses says, "Look at God's grace as He makes humanity image-bearers representing God here on earth." And this is true of every single person here today. This is not something that's confined to the

world of Genesis. You are an image-bearer. You are a regal representative of the King. You come today as a royal representative.

Now just think about that. God had options. There is nothing that's beyond His ability. With the sin that we see in Genesis 3 through 6, God would be entirely justified to say, "In this new world I'm not going to make you guys kings anymore." With the way in which we've dishonored Him in Genesis 3 through 6, God would be entirely justified to say, "We're going to start over, here's a new world, but you're not going to assume the same elevated position that you did back in Genesis chapter 1. In Genesis chapter 1, I set Adam up at the pinnacle of the created order. I made Adam and Eve on Day Six to sit above all of the created order. They were the prized possession, and they were set up as regal representatives. But in this new world you're going to come down because of your sin."

He would be entirely justified to say that. And yet with the sin in view, He gives the same imperative that He gave to Adam. He establishes us in that same lofty position as image-bearers of the King. We come here today as royal representatives above all of God's created order. That is an expression of God's grace to us. Entirely undeserved, He sets us up as image-bearers to rule and to reign over the earth.

Now think about with me the purpose. Why does He give this particular command? It's no different from Genesis chapter 1. In Genesis chapter 1, He says, "You're My image-bearer, you're My representative; now fill the earth." Back-to-back: image-bearer, fill the earth. Now here's my paraphrase. Let me just collapse those two ideas into one: "You're My image-bearer; fill the earth." What was the mandate? "Make My glory known."

You're My image-bearer, you are here to represent Me; now fill the earth, populate the earth." If you take those two thoughts together, the instruction was, "Make My glory known. This whole earth should be teeming with image-bearers representing Me. I want My glory to fill the earth." This is why when you get to the prophets and they look forward to the kingdom, the

establishment and the fulfillment of God's promises, they look forward, and Isaiah and Habakkuk say, "There is coming a day when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea." They get it; they're playing off of this idea and they're reaching forward, and they see one day this is going to happen, the mandate is going to be fulfilled.

Now if I had asked you when you came in this morning, "Tell me of your richest blessing," I hope you would have said, "My salvation in Christ"; and you would be right. And I say, "Okay, give me some more," and you might say, "Well, my family, my health, the job that God has given me, my circumstances," all good things expressions of His kindness. I wonder how many of you would have listed amongst your richest blessings that which God has asked you to do, not what He's given you, "but one of my richest blessings is that which God has required from me." This mandate rests with us. The Noachic covenant is universal and it's ongoing. This mandate comes to us: "Fill the earth; make My glory known." This is your job description, and it's one of your highest privileges.

Now how can that be? How can it be that God asks us something and that's our richest blessing? Because it gives us a sense of purpose. It explains why we're here. If Noah had come out from the ark and God had not said this, we would be floundering. He would be saying, "I'm thankful that He preserved me, I just don't know what I'm supposed to be doing right now."

And I often say, just about every single issue that you see in society today can be worked back to, in one way or another, a loss of a sense of purpose. We don't know what we're to be about. We don't understand why we're here. We've lost our sense of purpose, and that leads to all kinds of issues. A sense of purpose gives you direction, and it causes you to flourish.

As I was working through this text I was reminded of a scenario many years ago now. When we were first married, before we had started having kids, Laura was a teacher, and she taught at a school that was a particularly difficult, particularly difficult school; and one of the issues in the school and of the building was, of course, vandalism of the bathrooms. And the



head teacher at the time, she ran a tight ship – that's an understatement – and she was trying to work through a lot of the school's issues. And they had the money to refurbish the bathrooms, to start over again. "And of course, you put all this money in, you create these new bathrooms, and they'll just get vandalized again. So what are we going to do?" And she did something that was inspired. She grabbed a group of the students, she brought them in, and she said, "You guys are going to design the bathrooms." She said, "This is your project, not mine. I want you to design it; whatever you come up with, we're going to do. You pick the color scheme, you pick the layout, and it's going to be your bathrooms."

So the students did it. And the head teacher was true to her word. She honored their plans, she honored their choices, and the bathrooms were made; and those bathrooms were never ever vandalized. The students involved in the project guarded those bathrooms fiercely. Kid comes along with a spray can: "No, you don't. These are my bathrooms, you don't touch them," because they had a sense of purpose. They'd been given responsibility, and they were flourishing.

God says to us, "You have a job, you have a mandate, you have a task: you need to make My glory known." And therein lies one of your richest blessings. And as we see the new world post-flood, this first verse is an emphatic declaration of hope. All is not lost. God has not given up with us, He's not done with us. But He maintains our elevated position above all of created order. He gives us the same job description that He gave Adam. He continues to exercise trust in us; and for that, we can be thankful.

Our minds, on reading chapter 9, verse 1, should be the same as that of the psalmist who says, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" If I'm honest about my sin, if I'm honest about how we treated You, and I see this emphatic declaration of hope, I respond and say, "God, why? Why so good? Why so gracious? What is man that You are mindful of him?" This morning our responsibility is to praise God, to respond in praise for His goodness to us as He starts afresh with Noah, and He continues by appointing us as His image-bearers to fill the earth with His glory.

Now that's half the story. Dvorak wrote a symphony that was full of hope and triumph, but there are motifs, there are lines, there are melodies in there that are sad, that reflect on his part, a longing to be somewhere else; and it's the same in our passage today. There are reminders that the world is not as it once was. As we move now to consider not the man Noah, but the world in which he lives, we are reminded of the presence of sin. And here again we're just teasing out this compare and contrast exercise. We've noted some similarities between Genesis 9:1 and Genesis chapter 1; and now we're going to start to see some differences, and the differences remind us that sin is ever present.

Maybe some of you are already there. God said to Adam, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it." What God actually said to Adam was, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it," and it is noticeably absent in Genesis 9:1. He doesn't tell Adam to subdue the earth.

Now that is the first hint of the problem that Noah is facing. His omission of "subdue the earth" is not to say, "I don't want you to rule," but it's suggesting that he's going to struggle to rule. His omission of that last imperative suggests, "There are going to be some problems in your exercising of authority over the created order. It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be the same for you as it was for Adam." For Adam, in Genesis chapter 1, before sin entered into the world, the whole of the created kingdom sat in obedience to Adam and Eve perfectly. It's difficult for us to even imagine all of the animal kingdoms sat perfectly in obedience to Adam, they did exactly what Adam told them to do.

One of our developments, personally on a family level over the last year since I last visited, is that we got a puppy – one of the worst decisions I've ever made. I'll tell you, the kids petitioned for about a year, and I was the one person in the house saying no, and that works for me, because I get the final say. And it got to the point where the kids are closing prayers at mealtimes – no joke. I sat there at the table, I'm right beside them, and they're praying, "Thank You for the food and for Your goodness this day, and please let Dad say yes to a puppy." And this just went on and on and on and on. And then Laura supplements their efforts by telling them the

persistence, the parable of the persistent widow that comes to Jesus and just keeps knocking on the door. So, "just keep asking." So I gave in. I said, "Sure, let's do this." If you want to see a picture of a disobedient animal, come to my house. You want to see a picture of an animal not submitting to his master, come to my house.

But more broadly, we see that the animal kingdom is not assuming its rightful place under the head of humanity. God doesn't say, "Subdue it." In fact, what He does say, what He does say, Genesis 9:2, "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." So God doesn't say, "Subdue it," He says, "They're going to be terrified of you."

And you might say, "Well, it doesn't matter how we get there, surely that's job done." But that's not the case. The animal kingdom now has a fear, a dread, a terror of humanity, and that can play itself out in many ways. There might be some obedience, but not willfully. There might be the animal running away from Noah, the animal might attack Noah. That fear and that dread can play itself out in a number of ways, and that's what we experience.

The point is there is a clear fracture in the relationship between humanity and the created world. This is just one symptom, one expression of the discord which sin has introduced: "Things aren't as they should be, and so My mandate remains the same: fill the earth. But just so you know, it's going to be really hard." Never was the mandate easier than when it was given to Adam before sin entered the into the world. In God's grace, the mandate comes to us, given to Noah, still residing with us today, but the presence of sin makes it all together difficult to obey. The discord between the animal kingdom and humanity is just one expression of that.

Another difference, interestingly, is that our diet changes. God says, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. As I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." Now we need to be careful, because Genesis

I doesn't say necessarily exactly what man was and wasn't to eat as it relates to his daily diet. There's a very clear statement: "You are to eat the plants," there's just no mention of eating meat. And then in Genesis chapter 9, it crops up.

It seems reasonable to infer that prior to sin and God's wisdom, we didn't eat animals; post-sin, now we do. And I know what you're thinking: "I'm actually quite happy with this outworking of the fall." I'm with you; praise the Lord for good steak. But just be careful not to put your meaning on the text. Remember, the fact that we're told to eat meat is yet another expression of the brokenness that exists between us and the created order. This doesn't become a mandate to become a vegetarian, it's simply a reminder. One of the ways in which you will exercise control over the created order is simply to kill and to eat. "It's going to be really hard for you to master the created world," God says to Noah. "The presence of sin is going to make it really hard for you to obey My instructions. One of the ways in which you will make progress is to kill and to eat them. You're exercising your authority as you do that." And so we're just reminded again, things aren't as they should be.

God then goes on to talk about what happens if a human being dies. First of all, "If one of these creatures kills you, I'll require his life," the animal. And then He says, "And if a fellow man kills you, I'll require his life." So you see how this picture between the created world and humanity goes far beyond simply a discord between us and the animal kingdom. God is now starting to point to the discord that exists between us, between human beings, and He says, "In this new world, it is entirely plausible that you will kill one another; and if you do, I'll require the life of the murderer."

Of course, with this our minds go back to Genesis 4. The first sin that happens after Genesis 3 is that of murder, and specifically a man killing his own brother. One of the problems as you read Genesis, I find, is that the narratives are so familiar to us. A lot of these stories are so familiar to us, and we've been hearing them for years, and so we can easily lose the power and the significance of these narratives.

Just think afresh with me, if you are Adam and Eve, or if you are reading Genesis for the very first time ever and you get to Genesis 3 and you see just how much has been forsaken by virtue of sin, just how terrible are the consequences for Adam and Eve's disobedience eating a fruit, at the end of Genesis chapter 3 you don't know what's coming next, and the dust settles; God finishes speaking the judgments. And I think Adam and Eve might be sat there saying, "How's this going to play out? What's coming down the road? We understand that we've introduced sin into the world now. It's now in our DNA, we can't we can't get rid of it. And we understand exactly what we did wrong: we took of the fruit that God said don't take, and we see now our disobedience for what it was. But how is this sin thing going to play out? What's happening? What's coming around the corner?" And God says, Genesis chapter 4, "Murder."

The first act of disobedience after taking of the fruit is murder: a man killing his brother out of jealousy. "You go from taking a fruit to killing your brother." God says, "Let Me show you how sin is going to work itself out. This is no small thing that just happened. The consequences of what you just did are by no means light. There are some sins around us, in us, that we belittle and we think, 'Well, it's not really that serious.'" God says, "No, let Me show you how big a deal it is that you just disobeyed Me."

And do not think that you sit here this morning better than Cain in any way. Don't think that you sit here this morning in and of yourself, by your own strength, morally more upright than Cain was. Apart from any work of God's grace in your heart, you sit here this morning exactly the same as Cain. First John tells us, "He who hates his brother is a murderer." The murmurings in your heart of hatred, of dislike towards another human being are exactly the same murmurings that were in Cain's heart; and it is only God's restraining grace that has stopped you from killing someone. That's the only difference in your life and Cain's life.

We all sit here this morning grossly infected by the disease that is sin, and you can't get rid of. It courses through your veins, and you are as capable as of the sin that Cain committed, as he indeed was. And God makes that plain. He says, "If a man takes another man's life, I'm going to require his life."

He's reminding us that in this new world things aren't as they ought to be. Murder's a thing now. It's a real possibility. And just zoom out and consider how that functions as a hindrance to the mission. The mission is, "Image-bearers, representatives, fill the earth; make My glory known." Arguably there is nothing that could cause more injury to the mission than killing an image-bearer. Fill the earth with image-bearers, and we say actually, "We'll kill them. We're going to stop the mission advancing." And that propensity is in all of us.

In just a few chapters you'll be at the tower of babel incident. You remember that as the men come together and say two things: "Let us make a name for ourselves so that we may not be dispersed." Did you ever wonder why they said that second thing? "Let us make a name for ourselves," - there's their pride on display; they don't want to make a name for God, they want to make a name for themselves - "so that we may not be dispersed."

Why should that even be a concern to them? Why should they even care about dispersing? Because the mandate is, "Go, fill the earth," and their answer is, "We're not going anywhere." That is their very intentional act of disobedience against the mission, and that is the inclination of every single one of us apart from God's work of grace in our hearts. And so what we see is that the world in which Noah steps into, the world in which we find ourselves, is very, very, very far east of Eden. We're not where we want to be.

The last difference would be simply by focusing on the concept of image-bearing. God says in verse 6, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image." And a very simple observation is this, that in Genesis chapter 1, the concept of image-bearing was introduced in order to be celebrated. In Genesis chapter 9 the concept of image bearing is introduced as a warning.

In Genesis chapter 1, "Let Us make man according to Our image." One of the highest texts in that chapter, we celebrate this incredible privilege, image-bearing. In Genesis chapter 9 it functions as the basis of a warning

against murder. Look how far we've fallen. And so the composite picture of these seven verses is one of an emphatic declaration of hope, juxtaposed with notes of despair, an emphatic declaration of hope juxtaposed with very clear notes of despair. We've got a mission. We still sit at the top of the created order. Praise the Lord for His goodness! And look at the reality with which we're confronted. Look at the world that we live in. We praise God this morning for His goodness to us, and at the same time, we are all called to acknowledge honestly the presence of sin around us and in us. The text is a sobering reminder of our sin and the difficulties it presents to us as we seek to make God's glory known.

So the question is, "Where do we go? Where do we go from this?" We see the hope; but, boy, do we see the despair. Where do we go? We have to remember that these seven verses are part of the Noahic covenant.

I haven't mentioned this all that much this morning, I want to talk about it now: these seven verses fit within the broader context of a covenant. God is making a covenant with Noah. The way to think about the Noahic covenant is simply in terms of rest. The name Noah means rest. And when God established a covenant with Noah, what He was doing was He was introducing a level of rest, specifically rest, respite from the effects of sin. So the way the Noahic covenant works is to introduce barriers to sin itself. God says, "In this new creative work, by My grace I'm actually going to introduce some barriers to keep sin in, to stop it getting to the Genesis 6 levels. I'm not going to let sin have its own way."

The Noahic covenant has some very, very, very practical implications for the way you live your life. If you understand the theology of it, to introduce rest from sin, you start to see the importance of things like the death penalty. When a country does away with the death penalty for the crime of murder it makes a grave mistake, because that government is deciding to work against the divinely ordained rest that God has given us against the effects of sin. And there's more that we could talk about. The point is the Noahic covenant gives us rest. But here's the thing, it's not the final word, it's not the final answer.

We all understand the Noahic covenant is not God's final answer to the problem of sin. It gives us a measure of rest, it gives us a respite from the terrible effects of sin, but it's not the final answer. If God stopped here in Genesis chapter 9, we would still be in an incredible mess today because of our sin. We have to look beyond in order to understand where this covenant is headed. So what we might do is just think through the subsequent covenants. It's not the case that each covenant is the same. Some people will argue the various covenants of Scripture are a reiteration of the previous one. It's not the case, but they do build on each other. So Genesis chapter 9 is the first covenant. It's the Noahic covenant. It lays the foundation, it gives us rest.

In a few chapters time you're going to come to the Abrahamic covenant. There God singles out Abraham and his line, and He promises them land, seed, and blessing, and He says, "I'm going to work out My plan through you." This is God identifying ultimately and eventually the nation of Israel as His chosen instrument. That builds on the foundation laid by the Noahic covenant.

From there He goes to the Mosaic covenant, given at Sinai to the people of Israel as they enter into the land. He says, "Let Me give you some laws. If you obey them, you're going to flourish. You'll flourish in your relationship with Me in the land." It's an administrative covenant to administrate life. The people fail, they disobey, and eventually they go into exile.

The next covenant is the Davidic one. Think of a pyramid: the Noahic covenant is the foundation, then the Abrahamic, then the Mosaic, and then the Davidic. And the Davidic signals out one family, one line, the Davidic line. And He says, "Actually I'm going to work through this one line to raise up the final solution to the problem of sin." And as you know, that Davidic covenant then leads us to Christ, who brings in the new covenant, which was signed and sealed on the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished." And there is the final answer to the problem of sin.



What the Noahic covenant does is it introduces that storyline, it's not the final answer. We see in just seven verses an emphatic declaration of hope, but at the same time is juxtaposed with very clear expression of brokenness. And so we have to go somewhere else. We have to find the ultimate solution; and it's found in the new covenant, given by Christ on the cross, who says, "It is finished!"

"You want the final answer? You look to Me on the cross as a payment for your sin." And if you come here this morning not knowing this, not having put your faith in this, not orienting your life around this, then you sit in Genesis chapter 9. You are choosing to submit yourself to the sin that is in your heart and in the world. You haven't gone beyond this chapter in the biblical storyline, you stand under God's wrath accursed. And you have to give an account for your sin one day, and you won't be able to; and so He will punish you justly.

If you come here this morning having never put your faith in Christ, please look this morning ultimately to the cross, confess your sins to God, and say, "I accept Your Son as a Savior. I accept Your Son as my Savior and the payment for my sin." That's where this chapter should push us. The Noahic covenant cannot be the final answer, it can't. It is just the foundation that God then builds upon to lead us to Christ. And without Christ, you're lost; but with Him, you have everything.

Now one really interesting study is to think about the mandate and how that finds reiterations through Scripture. To further make the point, we can think about God's mandate to Adam and to Noah, "to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth." If you really want to know how this story ends, do a word study on that mandate. It is found over and over and over again throughout Scripture. God keeps bringing it up, and He keeps saying, "I am going to do this. You are faithless, you fail Me."

Remember, immediately after this text, Noah sins. He's not the perfect answer, he's not the solution; Noah sins. But over and over and over again we find the imperative being reiterated by God through Scripture

demonstrating His commitment to work out His plan. Now the final expression of that comes all the way in the New Testament. Turn with me to Paul's letter to the Colossians. We could spend the rest of our day tracing out this mandate as it finds expressions throughout the rest of Scripture. But let me just show you one final testimony to the mandate given to Adam and Noah in Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul's letter to the Colossians is loaded with creation theology. All through Colossians he is pointing the readers back to the theology of creation to serve a particular purpose.

Now look with me in Colossians chapter 1 what Paul says, verse 3: "We always thank God, the Father our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." The Colossians were doing a wonderful job. "We thank God for you," - verse 4 - "since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints," - verse 5 - "because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, that is the gospel," - verse 6 - "which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing."

"The gospel has come to you as it has in the whole world bearing fruit and increasing." Paul is playing with the mandate given to Adam. He's using the same verbs, as we're given to Adam, as we're given to Noah, and he's saying, "That mandate to fill the earth, to bear fruit, and to multiply," that mandate back in Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 is being worked out this very day through the gospel. He says, "The gospel is bearing fruit and multiplying." It's the gospel now that is bearing fruit and multiplying. And so it might be that in the course of this morning you've sat there and thought, "Well, if it's true that this imperative comes to me and rests with me today by virtue of the Noahic covenant, if it sits on me to be an image-bearer who is bearing fruit and multiplying, how do I work that out practically?" We had six kids in obedience to the Adamic mandate - I'm kidding.

Here's how you work it out practically. You anchor yourself to the gospel of Jesus Christ, because Paul teaches us it is through the gospel of Jesus Christ that the mandate is now being fulfilled. The gospel is bearing fruit. It is the gospel that's multiplying. It is the gospel that is increasing in this broken world. So if you want to be found faithful to the mandate given to Adam

and to Noah, you make your life all about the gospel. You sit under the gospel. You refresh your heart to the gospel each and every day. You open this Book and you study the gospel and you refresh your heart to it. You sing songs of the salvation that Christ brings, in fellowship you speak the truth to one another about the glories of the gospel, and then you start to order your steps around the imperatives that flow out of the gospel.

Later on in this letter Paul tells us, verse 15, "Jesus Christ is the image-bearer, He's the ultimate and perfect image-bearer. He alone is the one that perfectly made God's glory known." And then when Paul gets into the imperative sections in chapter 3, he says something very curious: "Put off the old man, put on the new man." Too many translations just change that and, "Say put off the old self, put on the new self." Paul is making an allusion all the way back to Adam. "Don't anchor yourself to Adam," he says. "Put off the old man, put on the new man Jesus Christ."

That is how you're found faithful this morning to the mandate given to Noah, which comes to you, which rests on your shoulders. You are responsible to that imperative, and the only way you can fulfill it is to anchor your life to the gospel. You immerse your heart and your mind in the gospel, and you order your steps around all of the commands that derive from it. And as you as a church collectively help one another to this end, as you link arms and you look one another in the eye and you say, "I am here to help you obey," and your neighbor says, "And I am here to help you obey," as you look at one another and say, "I am going to do all that I can to encourage you towards Jesus Christ, I am going to do all that I can to help you fix your eyes on the glories of the gospel as a way of life," when that is how you as a church think about your responsibility before God, He will be greatly glorified.

He's not getting into the specifics of what job you should choose and where you should live; it's a wisdom core, and you need to figure that out. But as a starter, you need to think about your responsibility to make God's glory known, and the only way you will ever succeed is if you link arms and say, "We are all about the gospel." And as you tread out a path of obedience, steadfast obedience, day after day, week by week, month after month,

through you, in ways that you won't even appreciate until you get to glory, the earth is being filled with the glory of God, until Jesus Christ returns. Let's pray to close.

[Prayer] Our Father, we praise You this morning for Your wisdom, as we see it in Your Word. We praise You for the emphatic declaration of hope that opens Genesis chapter 9. O Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him, that after all of the sin, You would reestablish him as the head of the created order, that You didn't say, "I'm done with you," You didn't demote man, You didn't bring him down to the level of the beast, You maintained his lofty position, and You gave him the same instruction as You gave Adam. You made us Your image-bearers with the glorious task of making You known. We praise You for that hope this morning.

And, Lord, with all honesty and sobriety, we acknowledge the presence of sin, the sin that does dwell in our hearts, and the sin that is around us. We see it etched out in the words that You gave to Noah. Things have changed; post-flood, things are different. We're not in Eden anymore, and we see that, and we repent of our own sin, and we seek Your forgiveness. Help us to be honest about the sin in our lives, and the desperate situation in which we find ourselves.

And, Lord, we rejoice to project forward beyond Genesis 9. It was but the first of many covenants, laying a foundation to hem in the effects of sin, giving us a measure of rest, so that Your plan could advance. Help us to remember this is not the final word. The Noahic covenant is not the final answer to the problem of sin; it lays the foundation for Your glorious and eventual response at the cross. That's where we see the final solution, and we rejoice in that. We delight that the new covenant is a reality for us.

Lord, if there's any here, if there's any here that don't know You in a saving way, be gracious to save them this morning. Quicken their hearts into repentance and faith in the risen Lord Jesus. And we ask that You'd help us to acknowledge our responsibility to make You known, to boast of Your glory. How? By anchoring ourselves to the gospel. We can't do it apart from

that. But Paul with just a brief illusion in Colossians 1 shows us. It is now by virtue of the gospel that the earth is being filled, that fruit is being born. It's through the gospel and no other means that the task is being completed.

We rejoice and ask that You would strengthen us. Father, strengthen this church to fix their minds and their hearts on the gospel, to orient our lives around the saving message of Christ, and to submit to all of His commands, that we would be found obedient, joyfully walking out a path of obedience, until Christ returns, trusting that in ways we can't necessarily see through our fidelity to the gospel, Your glory is being made manifest. This is our desire, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.