

Genesis 6-9 “Refuge from the Flood”

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- We are going to get to the ark and the rainbow in our story this morning. But the story of Noah and the flood begins somewhere else.
- As we've been following the Bible's story from the good creation in the garden to our rebellion that broke that relationship with him, things go from bad to worse fast.
- Disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit turns to violence. One brother killing another brother. Women being abused.
- God made these people special in his image and now they're destroying the life that he created. They're treating it how they want, not how he wants.
- [1 : 04] We might say that these big sins are such as you look at this world in that day that everyone is going to hell in a handbasket, we sometimes would say.
- But what the Bible indicates grieves God the most is what's going on in people's hearts. There's always a cane, a lame-ic, a big sinner to make you feel better about your own sin.
- We love to follow the sagas of big sinners in the news, right? The Epsteins, the murderers on trial, the terrorists.
- There's always an Adolf Hitler, right? At least I'm not like him. That's one reason these big sinners are talked about a lot.
- Something about them makes us feel just a little bit better about ourselves, doesn't it? Certainly they'll get the real punishment. I'm not so bad.
- [2 : 10] I want you to notice what God mentions leads him to wipe out the big sinners from the earth. Yes, there's been murder.
- But Genesis 6 opens talking about selfishness and lust. And then says, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- He was not inclined toward goodness, toward life with God, toward reflecting his image. No, mankind wanted to be God, wanted to do things his own way, fought about himself first and harbored evil desires in his heart.
- That is our big sin. How do our selfish hearts make God feel? And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart.
- So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.
- [3 : 37] Once again, man's sin so big that it impacts all of creation, right? God designed it all to work differently. We were to model God's good care for God's creation.
- But now, murderers and decent guys who tell little white lies to get people to like them more will be killed.

Now, rapists and nice girls who harbor jealousy toward others will be killed.

The story of the flood first shows us God's wrath as it is poured out in just judgment due to our sin.

Listen to what our sin deserves. Now, the earth was corrupt in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence and God saw the earth and behold, it was corrupt for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

[4 : 42] We did it. And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

And God follows through. Chapter 7, verse 21. After the flood, and all flesh died that moved on the earth. Birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth and all mankind.

Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground. Man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens.

They were blotted out from the earth. Do you understand what God is telling us in this story?

Is what sin deserves? The wrath and curse of God. Death, not just for the big sinners, sinners for all of us rebels.

[5 : 52] Even the ones of us who keep it in our heads and our hearts most of the time. Even those of us who help the little old lady across the street, but do it so that someone else is going to think well of me.

Or maybe she'll give me a tip. Who do lots of right things for lots of wrong reasons? Sinners like us.

You with me? That's the sinners that are being discussed here. Mercifully, God often restrains the judgment due to our sin in the moment.

So we don't always get this picture of exactly what our sin deserves, but it is also a mercy when God allows us to see, when he lets us see what just punishment really looks like, lest we think we're okay.

So that we don't minimize our sin or minimize his justice. May it never be. There are times God allows just judgment to break into temporal history and give us a glimpse of what we eternally deserve.

[7 : 07] The flood's the first big example of that in the story. A few generations later, Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed by burning sulfur from heaven.

In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira make a big donation to the church, but they lie about it and they're struck down immediately.

Sin must be destroyed. It incites God's just wrath. It offends his holy purity.

It violates his divine justice and the entire purpose of his creation because it keeps his people and his world from the relationship with him that he made them for.

So the flood comes. The heavens literally open, rain for 40 days and 40 nights, waters covering the mountain peaks, people and animals wiped out.

[8 : 19] Y'all, floods are always terrible, right? And this was the flood we've never seen the likes of again.

Chapter 7 recounts the waters rising. It recounts the death toll that we've already read about. And it concludes by saying that the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

But God remembered Noah. But God, always a good sign when you're reading the Bible.

This right here is the pinnacle of the whole story in these four chapters. All of the literary techniques are used to highlight chapter 8, verse 1.

But God remembered Noah. At the heart of the flood account is not merely a God who judges sin, but more importantly, a God who remembers and rescues.

[9 : 28] God wants people to see that he rescues even as he judges sin. Wow.

Think about that for a minute. Could there be any more unlikely time for a rescue to show up than right there when God is judging?

What a gracious God we're dealing with here. God remembered Noah. And when God remembers, it's not merely an intellectual memory thing, okay?

Just as in the Bible when we talk about God forgetting our sin, it doesn't just mean that he can't think about it anymore. He doesn't know what you did yesterday. It means that God's not holding our sin against us.

He's not counting it against us. He's not using it to beat you down. That's forgetting. When God remembers, he acts to rescue, okay?

[10 : 27] It's more than just that he thinks about it. Remember that. When God remembers, he acts to rescue. It's gonna come up again. But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark and God made a wind blow over the earth and the waters subsided.

The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed. The rain from the heavens was restrained and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days, the waters had abated.

rescued, right? Finally, the water's gone. Back in chapter 6, when God first reveals his intent to destroy the earth, we get a similar but God interruption.

Verse 8, but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.

Noah walked with God. Let me be clear because these are strong words. Noah was not perfect. We see that later before you get out of chapter 9 in big ways.

[11 : 45] But he walked with God. Isn't that what God loves? Isn't that why God made us? That we would walk with him.

In contrast to living for self, to being filled with evil thoughts, Noah filled up his days with thoughts of God all the time.

Don't forget that relationship is the reason you exist. Noah walked with God. God and one day, I don't know, maybe they were actually walking.

God had news for Noah. There's bad stuff coming, lots of water, right? So, build an ark. Verse 18 of chapter 6, But I will establish my covenant with you, Noah, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. God's got plans for the future. But what he does here is he makes a covenant.

[13 : 02] Covenant. When you hear that word covenant, I want you to think relationship. We're gonna hear that word a lot in these stories through the Old Testament. It's a relationship, a special relationship that speaks of God's salvation, of his grace, of his creating a family.

We're gonna hear more about it later in this story. But what God has just said is what happens when God tells them it's time. Chapter 7, verse 7, Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood, of clean animals and of animals that are not clean and of birds and of everything that creeps on the ground.

Two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah as God had commanded Noah. In this story, the famous vehicle for God's rescue, kids, what rescued Noah and his family?

The ark, right? The dimensions of the ark are really mind-blowing. If I hadn't been to the replica in Kentucky myself, I wouldn't be able to imagine it.

I recommend that visit, by the way. You'll be struck by just the grand scale of the whole thing. It'll give you a vision for where the animals could have fit and what it might have looked like.

[14 : 29] But I want to help you where you're sitting right now. You're in a big room with lots of people. The ark was a wooden boat, solid wooden boat, almost exactly as wide as this sanctuary from wall to windows, okay?

All of this is ark. In fact, the top of the ark, can you look up at the ceiling? It's a ways up there. The top of the ark would have just broken through the ceiling, taller than this room.

But this will get you. If I'm standing right here at the front of the ark, looking over the edge of the boat towards the rest of it, the ark was so big that you'd have to go out the back doors.

It would stretch through the parking lot, across Carl T. Jones Drive, somewhere over there in the middle of the cow pasture would be the end of the ark. That's how big this boat is.

See, God is providing a refuge refuge for Noah, right? To rescue him from the flood that is coming. He instructs Noah how to build the ark and he asks Noah to trust him.

[15 : 38] Why does Noah have to trust him? Well, because there didn't seem like a lot of need for a really big boat like that where Noah was. Wouldn't have made sense to anyone, I don't think.

but with, I'm sure, limited understanding in his own heart, with plenty of mocking from his neighbors, Noah trusted and obeyed God.

Maybe you can relate to how hard it can be to trust God when you don't understand. when life just doesn't make sense.

When others mock you and say, you're really going to do it that way? It's so stupid. When you're tempted to trust your own instincts, they make more sense to you.

Maybe God is saying to you again today, trust me. The safe place to live is following my directions. Trust me.

[16 : 42] So, God rescues eight people, Noah's family, in the ark. It's a good thing they got on board, the one safe place left, right?

Only Noah was left and those who were with him in the ark. It's also an amazing picture of God's grace, isn't it?

Even in the midst of all of that judgment, he's rescuing. There's so much judgment here, it's easy to think that this Yahweh is full of wrath and justice only.

But no, this God is not an either-or deity of our imagination. That's the way some of us make him up. Some of us say, well, he's one way in the Old Testament, he's another way in the New Testament.

No, he's not a different God. He is all the time full of grace and full of truth, right? Both. The world may be going to hell in a hand basket, but God is always looking to rescue.

[17 : 52] Like Lot escaping Sodom. Like the exiles returning with Nehemiah to God's city, God always rescues a remnant when he judges sin.

2 Peter says Noah is an example as well. God knows how to rescue his people when such destruction comes upon sin. Know that.

Here it's eight people and pairs of animals reminding us this story is not merely about judgment, but even more poignantly, even more powerfully for us, it's about rescue in the midst of wrath.

See, those who take refuge in the ark and survive the flood, they don't merely survive, they become a part of God's wonderful recreation.

When Noah and his family get off the ark after the flood, we read this at chapter 8 verse 20, then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

[18 : 59] There's a reason they had more. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth, but neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. God's world is going to continue.

Sun and moon, plants and animals, seasons and centuries. And in case you're wondering about where you fit in, people I created, God says, flashback to Genesis 1, the Garden of Eden.

We read it just a couple weeks ago. And God blessed Noah. You remember that?

God blessed. He's starting fresh. What does He start with every time? Blessing. Blessing the way He engages. You're hearing the echoes of Genesis chapter 1?

[20 : 11] Keep listening. Blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. There it is, fill. Fill it, it's what I created you to do.

Shine my image everywhere so it's full of my glory. And also, rule. 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. There's food provided again. As I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

Still in Genesis 1, look at verse 6 of chapter 9. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image.

That highest of all blessings that were given, right? Made in the image of the one who made us. As we fill, you be fruitful and multiply, team on the earth and multiply in it.

[21 : 23] God is doing something new again, isn't he? There's a recreation and now here comes the covenant again. Relationship, remember?

Relationship. What will Noah have to do to be good enough for God this time? That's not how this Yahweh works, is it?

Listen to this one-sided covenant. God said to Noah and his sons with him, behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you and with every living creature that's with you, birds, livestock, every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark, it's for every beast of the earth.

I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

a covenant with all of creation. Beautiful. Established and upheld by whom? By the creator single-handedly.

[22 : 31] Seven times in this story we hear about the covenant that will carry the new creation forward in relationship with its creator. No matter what, no matter what they do, God will not destroy the earth like this again.

Even though his judgment is real, he is making all things new and there's a new path going forward. Are you ever discouraged by the wickedness around you?

Do you sometimes feel like, don't raise your hand, America is going to hell in a handbasket? Do you think God's people receiving this book the first time, remembering Egyptian oppressors for years and years and generations witnessing their own selfishness and idolatry, disobedience to God's commands that didn't make sense to them, grumbling against God's leaders who just seem to be taking them towards more danger, right?

You think they might have been easily discouraged at living in a world like this? What's God's message to them and to us then through Noah's story?

Isn't it God saying, trust me, follow me because I'm restoring this world in the midst of sinful rescued people.

[23 : 58] All the time that's what he's doing. Noah blows it big time in the next story. But God is committed to remaking things the way he wants them.

I don't know if you're blowing it big time right now or if you think you never have. But you might look around you and think somebody's blowing it big time. Everything's out of control. There is no hope and God says that's exactly where I show.

Those are the kinds of people I use. I rescue them and I recreate with them. How do you know that that's what God's doing?

Kids, how do we remember that God keeps his promises? What does God give us in the sky? It's the rainbow, right?

Verse 13. I have set my bow in the cloud, God says, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

[24 : 56] When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

when the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

Don't you love that the bow is in the clouds? The darkness still lingering from the storm of God's judgment that has come.

And the word for rainbow, the reason we read bow here, it's the same word as for a war bow that you would use to, you know, shoot an arrow.

God, see, is hanging up his bow, isn't he? He's not coming to attack his creation, rather he's coming to restore his creation. Kids, I told you when you see a rainbow, I want you to remember what?

[26 : 02] God keeps his promises. You want to know something really cool about that, kids? It's not just there when you see the rainbow, it's not just that you're supposed to remember that God keeps his promises.

You know who else sees a rainbow and remembers that God keeps his promises? God does. Look at this. I will see it.

I will remember the everlasting covenant, God says. That means a covenant that's still going on today. God still sees the rainbow and he still remembers his commitment to you.

When you see a rainbow, you can also remember God remembers. And when God remembers, what does he do? He acts to rescue, remember? Remember? So you, you who survived the flood have a purpose then, don't you?

Don't lose sight of being an image bearer blessed to live in relationship with the creator because he's still rescuing, he's still recreating, he's still restoring and he's calling you to fill the earth with his glory as he restores you so that his glory shines everywhere.

[27 : 18] The reason you exist is relationship. It's a relationship he remembers to restore. He promises. Don't lose sight of God's promise.

You, even you, even me can be rescued from wrath, can be repurposed for restoration in relationship with him.

But to be part of that, you must be in the ark to survive the flood. This may be patently obvious as you read the story, but those who are a part of the recreation in chapter 9 have all been in the ark through the flood.

Friends, please, please don't miss this, okay? Simple reality, but really important for us. Don't miss what this is telling us.

There is another flood coming. When the heavens will open and the justice and wrath of God will be poured out on sin.

[28 : 34] A day, the Bible says, of terror and destruction, of weeping and wailing. Big sinners on the news and in prison and everyday day sinners with selfish desires and evil thoughts, both types going to hell in a handbasket.

And this is the only warning we get. Jesus says this flood will come on a day when we are eating and drinking, getting married, going to work.

So many of us pursuing our normal lives, going to school, spending money, scrolling on our phones to see if there's anything of significance going on in the world.

Just living for ourselves, and we won't know it, but there's another flood coming. And another ark has been built.

Dear people, please, please listen. Don't laugh. Don't mock this. Don't ignore it because you live in a world where it doesn't seem like you need rescuing.

[29 : 51] There is another flood coming. There is another ark that has been built. And you don't have to build it, but you must come aboard.

You must. See, there was another day in God's story when His judgment broke into temporal history and was poured out against sin without restraint on a man hanging on a cross.

for people who mocked the one obeying God. For them, the nails were driven into His hands and into His feet. For people who just live for their own comfort, the crown of thorns was excruciatingly pressed into His head.

For people who are big, evil murderers and idolaters and everyday normal covetors and selfish people, God poured out His wrath and His curse while turning away His face of love and blessing.

Jesus suffered so that when the flood of God's wrath comes against sin, people like us deserving to be destroyed and wiped out can be safe in the ark in Jesus.

[31 : 15] Jesus, that's why He hung there. Remember, when God judges sin, He always rescues a remnant. And if this little ark right here is only a small model of that really huge ark, then Noah's really huge ark that goes across the street is only a small model of the ark of Christ in whom we're safe from the flood.

The ark of Christ in whom there is room for our friends and our neighbors and people from every tribe and tongue and nation, no matter how big of sinners they may be.

The ark of Christ in whom on the darkest nights, in the strongest storms, there shines a bow pointed at heaven where God takes the arrow for sinners, where God suffers to rescue us, to bring us back into relationship with Him, to welcome us into His new creation.

Friends, flee the wrath to come. It is real and we have been warned and run to the ark of Jesus.

Only Noah and those in the ark were left and friends, everyone in the ark is safe. Trust the promises of God and the God of the promises who still hangs rainbows in the clouds so that we remember that He remembers us.

[32 : 51] Let's pray. Father, how good you are to remind us. But more importantly, how amazingly gracious you are to remember us.

Thank you. Thank you for the call today that we can turn from our sin and run to Jesus and there's safety for us.

Father, would no one in the sound of my voice be left outside that ark? Might you so work, Holy Spirit, that though we see our sin bigger and bigger this morning, we see a Savior who's more than enough, whose mercy is more, and whose love will never let us go.

Work in us for the sake of eternity and for today, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

Thank you.