

Genesis 8:20-22 Our Covenant-Keeping God 10/22/17

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.²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse^[a] the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

(Pastor prays)

We live in a world of broken promises and defensive postures, a world where trust must be earned and is very quickly lost. We live in a Facebook world of aired grievances, defamed reputations and political meanderings that make it increasingly difficult for Christians to talk to and trust one another. As James would say, my brother, these things ought not be so.

We serve a covenant-keeping God who has redeemed people of every tongue and tribe and nation. He brought us together through the blood of Christ and made us a church neither of black skin nor white skin but of the red blood of Jesus. God's grace to me in Christ strips me of pride and rights and politics and makes me a part of a family defined, not by culture or upbringing, but by the cross. The covenant in Christ that saves me is the covenant that makes me love and be loved by the family of God in Christ.

I say all of that as a framework for the passage we've read and The Lord's Supper we will take together today. They are connected. At the end of Chapter 8 and on into Chapter 9, we have before us what is known as the Noahic Covenant, the covenant with Noah that gives us hope and a pattern, an opaque but real picture of our security in Christ.

W. A. Criswell was right when he said there is a scarlet thread that runs through the whole Bible and, in this passage, we have a pattern for our salvation found in the pattern of all of the covenants.

Covenants are established by God just as salvation is. Salvation is God's work, not ours. It's God's work purchasing *people* not possibilities. Covenants are eternal. Salvation is

eternal just as God is eternal. A covenant is a picture of God's grace. It's always grace. It's a gift of undeserved, unearned love.

With that setup we return to Noah and his family coming off the ark after a year. In verses 18 & 19, as he departs, a new creation begins. A new start. Just like some of you need. A new start. Yesterday is gone. God is here, and your life can change.

In Christ, Our God Makes All Things New

Here are a couple of things to consider to start this week off differently.

Get Serious About Worship

For our context, I mean us gathering together as a body to lift up the name of Christ.

Let me show you where I get that. Let's back up and start reading in verse 18 and read through verse 20 and notice the first thing Noah does. *So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.*

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.

Noah's first free act when he got off that ark was worship. Here is a clear indication that Noah knew that God had delivered him. Notice the nature of his worship in verse 20. It was about God. He built an altar to the LORD. His concern was God. God had delivered, sustained, and blessed him and now Noah's worship became an act of gratitude, praise, thanksgiving and recognition of God.

I look at this and I am convicted of how cheap we make worship, how soft we have become, and how easily our sensibilities are offended. When we forget: I was going to Hell and God pulled me out of the fire! I was cleansed and saved! He forgave me, and I am redeemed! He bought me and adopted me! I'm gonna come to worship and complain? Do you know the Hell you've been pulled out of?!

Worship was costly. All the clean animals. They could've used those animals for themselves, but they gave to the Lord. I think this has direct application for believers. We give financially to the Lord not just to fund the organization called Hickory Grove. We do it as an act of joyful worship that says, "Father, I recognize that everything I have

is yours and I give as a way of praising.” I really don’t know how you can rightly worship and *not* give. But it’s not just money. This is about you releasing yourself to God. No holding back. A joyful recognition that God is good and He has provided for you.

There is something else about worship. It must be Christ-centered. Let’s read verses 20-21 together. *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. ²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.*

Here you have the framework that we find developed in Leviticus and then baptized in Hebrews. The sacrifice of Noah was a reminder that sinful humanity always required a mediation with God. It’s what Paul said about the Old Testament in Colossians 2:17, *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* So, the picture of the sacrifice points us to Christ. It’s through His life laid down that life can flourish. It’s through Christ on the cross, His life laid down, that believers in Christ flourish. It’s why we do The Lord’s Supper so often: to remind us.

It’s through the death of Christ that we can worship. That’s why I am asking you today, this week, to get serious about worship.

Trust the Nevers of God

The “nevers.” Let’s read verse 21 and listen to what the Lord says He will never do. *And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.*

Now often we say we are never going to do something and we end up doing it. I’m *never* going to own a minivan. I’m *never* going to Disney World or *never* going to weigh over 230 lbs. Even the Apostle Peter made a “never statement” he couldn’t keep, when he said to Jesus, “Even if I have to die with you, I will *never* disown you.” The Lord is not like that. His *nevers* are true and you need to learn to trust true *nevers*.

In Judges 2:1 it says, *Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. In Psalm 55:22, Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. Proverbs 10:30 says, The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land.*

Of course, then, there is Jesus. Jesus used "never" more than anyone else in the Bible. In John 4:14 He says, *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" In John 8:51, *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.*" And in John 10:27-28, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* And all through the Bible in Joshua and Psalms, Paul in Hebrews it says, "I will *never* leave you. I will *never* forsake you." Get serious about worship. Trust God's *nevers*.

Throw Yourself on God's Grace

Let me show you where I get this idea.

Turn back with me to Genesis 6:5 to see the cause of the flood. *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.*

Ok. Now look at the description of man after the flood in 8:21. *And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.*

Man was a sinner going *into* the ark. Man was a sinner *coming out of* the ark.

There are four things we know about sin from verse 21. Original sin is from childhood. Genesis 6:5 shows us that sin deserves punishment. It's the reason for the flood. There should be a flood every day. Behavior management won't change this and it just frustrates us. Sin calls for atonement. In Genesis 8:21, Noah's offering pleased God.

There is only one antidote to sin, and that is Grace, God's grace shown to us in Christ that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It's what we do today as we celebrate The Lord's Supper. We remind ourselves that God is Holy, man is a sinner, Christ died for sinners and that calls for a two-sided response: turning *away* from sin and turning *to* Christ in Faith.

(Pastor explains The Lord's Supper and prays)