

God's Grace Preserves

GENESIS 8 | PASTOR JAKE LIEDKIE

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Well, this morning we're going to be in Genesis chapter 8, so I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Genesis chapter 8. Last week I heard there were a few surprises that we made it through a whole chapter, and I kind of took that as a challenge. So we're gonna go through an entire chapter again this week. Genesis chapter 8 verses 1 through 22, and entitled this morning's message, God's Grace Preserves.

God's Grace Preserves. I want you to think this morning, before we get into the text, about how you view God's care for you. How do you view your relationship to God, and in particular how God treats you, how he regards you? Maybe we could say it this way, in the particular, specific circumstances of your life, do you see God being faithful to you? Do you see God providing for you? Doing so in such a way that that you're comforted, and he gets the glory.

I'm convinced, being in the church for many years, that many believers live in a state of perpetual hopelessness or discouragement, because they don't view God's perfections and their relationship to God in light of his perfections rightly. They kind of know generally these truths, but they don't they don't bring those home into the everyday circumstances of life. The truth of the matter is we can't see God.

We pray to him, but he doesn't speak audibly to us. He speaks to us through his word, but it's not like he can just go sit on the couch together, and he can put his arm around you. There's an element of faith in the Christian life that that must lay hold of promises that that are yet unrealized.

Believing at times in the midst of circumstances that appear to be contrary. And so Genesis 8 brings us to a passage that it is absolutely striking concerning the faithfulness of God and his forbearance. And so we throw that statement around a lot.

We'll say, well, God is faithful, and I think we mean it insofar as it goes. It's kind of just a statement like God is faithful. What does it actually mean that God is faithful? I think Genesis 8 puts really this gracious faithfulness of God on display.

So let's read our passage this morning, Genesis chapter 8. We're gonna see how God deals with Noah as Noah and the family and the animals get off of the ark. Genesis 8, 1. Then God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the waters subsided.

Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed and the rain from the sky was restrained. And the water receded from the earth going forth and returning and at the end of 150 days the water decreased. In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, Noah rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

Now the water decreased steadily until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared. Then it happened at the end of 40 days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made and he sent out a raven.

It went out flying back and forth until the water was dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove from him to see if the water was abated from the face of the land. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot.

So it returned it to him into the ark for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he stretched out his hand and took it in and brought it into the ark to himself. Then he waited another seven days and again, he sent out the dove from the ark.

The dove came to him toward evening and behold, in its beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth and he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove but it did not return him again. Now it happened in the 601st year.

In the first month, on the first day of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. In the second month, on the 27th day of the month, the earth was dry.

Then God spoke to Noah saying, go out of the ark you and your wife and your sons and your son's wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may swarm

on the earth and that they may be fruitful and multiply on the earth. So Noah went out and his sons and his wife and his son's wives with him.

Every beast, every creeping thing and every bird, everything that moves on the earth went out by their families from the ark. And Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma and Yahweh said to himself, I will never again curse the ground because of man.

For the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done, while all the days of the earth remain. Seed time and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease.

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Keeping an outline this morning, it would be this grace on display as the waters recede. Grace on display as the waters recede.

This is an account of God's graciousness to Noah and ultimately to humanity. And so our first point comes to us in verses 1 through 14, and it's this God considers Noah on the boat. Okay, God considers Noah on the boat.

Verse 1 says, then God remembered Noah. Don't skip over that personal language. And think of the hundred different ways that Moses could have described this moment.

Things like, when the flooding reached the appointed number of days. Or when the water had gotten high enough, long enough to drown everyone. Or when God had decided that his point had been unequivocally made.

And we read in the text, then God remembered Noah. This is to be seen as personal. God's personal involvement in caring for his own, as the Bible would depict God as a compassionate father.

Or times a protective eagle. And when you read that God remembered, it's not like when we remember. Right? We have memory problems.

And this is just part of what it means to be human. In fact, for those of you who are into multitasking, it's not a real thing. Okay? Your brain can really truly focus on one thing, and

then at most, you can maybe have three to four other categories kind of running in the background.

Really can't have two things at the foreground, and you really can't have more than about three or four kind of rolling around at the same time. This happens, right? Sometimes you'll be in a conversation, and you're thinking, all right, and then I need to say this, and you follow up here, and I want to go back, and oops, something else came in, and it bumped something out the back. Like, we just struggle to remember.

When you read God remembers, it doesn't mean that he ever forgot. It's not as if God doesn't have enough computing power, and he must concentrate on one thing at a time. First John 3 20, God knows all things.

And he knows all things at all times. And he sees all things. Psalm 33, he sees all the sons of men.

He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth. He understands all of their works. So when the Bible says God remembers, it's to highlight, not that he's going from forgetting to recognizing, but rather, God is about to act in accordance with his character and his promises.

God's about to act in accordance with his character and his promises. Psalm 98 3 puts it this way. He's remembered his loving-kindness and his faithfulness to the house of Israel.

And so when you read that God remembered Noah, it's not that that Noah is just such an unforgettable guy. When you meet Noah, it's never gonna forget that guy. You know, this is God recalling the fact that he made a promise to Noah.

If you remember back in chapter 6 18, he said, I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark. I'm gonna save you, Noah. I'm gonna preserve you in a flood of judgment.

I'm gonna provide salvation for you. And so when you think of God remembering, you're to understand it as the all-seeing, all-knowing God now coming to his creatures and acting in fulfillment of his promises. So God remembering Noah is a way of expressing God's faithfulness to this man on the ark.

And in fact, God coming to the aid of his people uses remembrance language to have the Old Testament. It's gonna happen soon to Israel when they're stuck in Egypt as slaves. And God is going to look upon their plight, and we read in Exodus 2 24 that God heard their groaning, and he did what? He remembered his covenant.

And so you might be sitting here this morning, and you say, you know what? I feel a little bit forgotten about by God. I have some difficult things in my life. I have some hard things that have been going on.

I have circumstances that haven't pound out the way that I would intend them to. I'm bearing certain griefs and sorrows. Or maybe I have a circumstance in my life that doesn't immediately and obviously line up with the character of God, and I feel frankly a little bit forgotten or uncared for.

Your emotions ever told you that God is distant from you? I would say this, it's possible that God is distant from you. But if you're not in Christ, if you've not repented and believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you've not found salvation, then your feelings are reality. But if you're in Christ, then God always remembers his covenant people, and yet sometimes we feel differently.

It was Isaiah that was speaking in Isaiah 49 of Jerusalem, and what was Jerusalem saying in Isaiah 49? Yahweh has forgotten me. The Lord has forgotten me. And what did God say to that? Here was his response.

Can a woman forget her infant and have no compassion on the son of her womb? You think, well, no, I mean like moms with infants, I mean, they're pretty attentive. But then he says this, even these may forget. There might even be a mom that would forget about her infant.

But he says, I will not forget you. Behold, I've inscribed you on the palms of my hands, and your walls are continually before me. If you are in Christ, and you are part of God's covenant people, then God will always remember you.

He will remember his covenant to you. He's gonna bring your salvation to completion. He knows your circumstance.

I have no idea what Noah's mental state was as he was cooped up inside of an ark for the better part of a year, but I would imagine at some point he had to think, Lord, are we ever

gonna get off this boat? God remembered Noah. He remembers Noah. He remembers his promise.

He remembers his covenant. And he made the promise not just to Noah, but to the beasts, and the cattle that were with him in the ark. And so what does God do? He acts in accordance with his character and his promises.

And God caused, second part of verse 1, a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. Okay, tremendous amount of water. There's a tremendous amount of water on the earth.

It's incalculable, the amount of water, the sheer volume of it. And at this point, we're starting to get kind of some timelines here. We're reading in verse 2 that the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain of the sky was restrained.

Okay, so sometimes people read the floodgates of the sky, and they conjure up all kinds of ideas. There was an idea popularized in the 60s by a couple of men who wrote a book that there was a water canopy. That would be the firmament from Genesis 1.6, and this kind of vapor barrier protected the atmosphere.

It explains why dinosaurs lived, and now they don't. It explains why men lived long lives before, and now they don't. The text doesn't indicate that there was any kind of a water canopy.

There's a lot of scientific challenges even with that view. Here, rather, it's just poetic imagery. The floodgates of the sky were closed.

So the picture is, wherever the water came from, God flooded the earth with water from above. It doesn't state how he did it. Clouds or canopy, how he injected water into the atmosphere, but it states that he did it.

And then also there was water that was coming up out of the deep. Depicted as from below. Underground water, likely seismic disruptions, tectonic plates shifting, volcanic activity.

Possibly some of the crevices that are open in the ocean now were water coming from within the earth. The text says that God, remembering Noah, caused a wind to pass over the earth. Whether that wind kept the water in the earth's atmosphere or took it away, the

point is that God is drying out the earth, and he's drying out the earth in faithfulness to Noah.

For this guy and his family. For those of you who are trying to get the time sequence together and are interested in this, we do have a clear time stamp on the bookends of the time that Noah is on the ark. The first bookend is back in chapter 7 verse 11.

Where we read in the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the 17th day of the month. On this day all the fountains of the great deep split open and the floodgates of the sky were opened. So the flooding starts there.

According to the verses before, Noah was on the ark for the week leading up to that. So we have the date, the exact date that the flood began in chapter 7 verse 11. He was on the boat a week early getting prepared.

Then we read that they got off the boat in chapter 8 verses 13 and 14, that this happened in the 600th first year. Verse 14, in the second month on the 27th day of the month. So those are the bookends.

So we know when the floodwaters began. We know Noah got on the boat a week before that. We have the exact date that Noah got off of the vessel.

So as we walk through this, I'll just kind of make mention as to where we're at along the way. In the course of what was a little more than a year. We read in verse 4, in the 7th month, on the 7th day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

Okay, so this is our time stamp here. We know the water's been prevailing on the earth for 150 days according to Genesis 7 verse 24. So this is the 150 day marker on the 7th month on the 17th day of the month.

And it is at this point that the ark now comes to rest. If you remember, the highest mountains, the text said, were covered by 15 cubits of water. And that makes sense because the ark itself was 30 cubits.

And naval architects would calculate that the draft, that's the part of the ark's hull that would be under water, that would be submerged, would be about half its height. So if you have a 30 cubit tall ark floating in the water, 15 cubits are below, 15 are above. That's why the water was 15 cubits above the highest mountain.

It meant that the ark was floating. It wouldn't scrape the mountaintops as it floated around. And as the waters begin to settle down and begin to recede, the ark rests in the mountains of Ararat.

So this puts us, for our time stamp, five months from when it first started raining. Okay, five months from when the flood waters began. The first 40 days and nights were torrential downpour according to Genesis 7 verse 12.

And during those 40 days, the water was prevailing, the water was multiplying, it was coming from above and from below. Picture there is a God opened up the storehouses of water full throttle. Then over the next 110 days, the water remained, it prevailed.

And at the end of 150 days, which is where we're at here, the water receded just to the point where that ark that had been floating came to rest in the mountains of Ararat. I think we kind of always picture the ark like landing on the very peak of a mountain. Almost like you need to wait carefully as you get off.

Probably not exactly how it happened. Maybe picture a nice plateau so everyone could safely get off and not have like a 30,000 foot descent. But somewhere in the mountains of Ararat, the vessel comes to rest.

If you want to kind of get in your mind's eye, it's anachronistic, their months were different. But I thought I would just translate this into our calendar months to kind of give you an idea of what the timeline was like. Okay, so just hang with me.

These are the wrong months, but we're going to use them. They got on the ark conceptually on the second month on the 10th day. So we could say they got onto the ark on February 10th.

The waters came then a week later, which would be February 17th. And that would be Noah's date there in Genesis 7, 11. The floodwaters then rise for 40 days to bring you to the equivalent of March 27th.

Then the waters prevailing, meaning it's really remaining on the earth, but the active storehouses of water are not continuing to multiply. The water got up to the point it needed to. Now we're at July 17th of that same year.

The waters have begun decreasing such that the earth rests. Now when we come to verse 5, the water decreased steadily until the 10th month. In the 10th month on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

This would bring us three months later to October 10th. So the water got on the earth a lot faster than it came off. You understand that? 40 days to fill up.

Five months later, we're still sitting on the ark. We're 110 days later. The ark comes to rest.

Now we're slowly waiting for the waters to recede. And the ark here is said to be somewhere in the mountains, upon the mountains of Ararat. Over the years, there have been many claims to have discovered the ark.

I think it was duped a couple times growing up, and then you kind of just get used to it that every few years, someone is going to announce that they found some piece of the ark or some piece of wood, some photograph that they caught it, and then something happened, you know, to the photograph. Usually it's speculation or you find out it's fabricated. I'll just say two things, maybe to kind of shepherd us in how we think about this.

First of all, just don't be vulnerable to myths and speculations. God's people are to deal in the truth. So don't follow all of the vain speculations of people that are always trying to promote new ideas of things that they've found.

There's people who have devoted their entire lives to archaeological expeditions to finding the ark. And so as believers, we're to be steadfast, not easily taken for a ride. So just be sober as you assess those things.

Second, I'll just say on the face of it, it seems extremely unlikely that any part of the ark would ever be discovered. Just in my drive to church, I pass multiple wooden buildings that are less than 100 years old, and they're falling apart. They're falling down.

And so sunlight every time destroys wood, let alone rain, humidity, temperature changes, bugs. All the people would potentially want to repurpose the wood. So I don't think there's probably an ark to be found.

Maybe you had an ancient preservation society dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the ark. I mean, it just gets a little absurd, right? You picture, like, one of Noah's grandsons strapping himself to the ark, you know, to preserve it and not let anyone

take the wood away. It's just much more logical that that wood probably was taken and used, utilitarian.

But whatever the case, the ark comes to rest. The waters are slowly, slowly receding, verse 5. The tops of other mountains begin to appear, entire mountain ranges. And in verse 6, Noah starts to check the water tables.

We read, then it happened at the end of 40 days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. So this is 40 days into the 150 days of the receding waters. It's the second major time division.

It began in the seventh month. And now for our little exercise, this would put us at November 11th. So happy Veterans Day.

Noah gets to open the window of the ark. It's like the text there is stating that he had made. So this is the window that he built.

He finally gets the chance to open it up and to send out a bird. And so verse 7, he sends out a raven. It went out flying back and forth until the water was dried up from the earth.

And so it's interesting here in God's commitment to means that Noah's not opening the door to the ark prematurely. I mean, can you imagine what that would have been like? We have problems in our vehicle if someone gets unbuckled prematurely, right? I've been on many planes where we're still on the tarmac and the ding hasn't happened, people start to take off their seatbelts. It becomes challenging to get everyone kind of back in order.

So all of the ark is still sealed up. The door is closed. Noah has extra birds on board.

And so he starts using them as scouts. We see animals already proving useful to man. Sends out the raven.

It flies back and forth until the water was dried up from the earth. Ravens would eat carry-ons. So if there was any kind of dead meat lying around, the raven would have been able to be sustained on that.

Verse 8. Then Noah takes a dove and sends it out from him to see if the water was abated from the face of the land. The dove goes out. It finds no resting place in verse 9. So it comes back because there's still water on the surface of the earth.

So Noah brings the bird back in. He decides to give it another week. Verse 10.

He waits another 10 days. He sends another dove out from the ark. This dove comes back.

And this time the dove has in its beak an olive leaf. Okay. Things are growing.

And if you've seen in the Christian bookstore, the little doves with the leaf in its mouth, this is obviously the text that it is taken from. And yet when Noah sees that bird come back with that little sapling, that fresh leaf, he knew, the text says, verse 11, he knew that the water was abated from the earth. I mean, he knows things are starting to be produced.

It's amazing. Just a couple of weeks ago, as part of our science curriculum at home, the kids are learning about seeds. And one of the joys of parenthood is relearning things that you've forgotten.

So if you asked me like two weeks ago, how a seed works, I'd say, I don't know. And now I know. So I just got a chance to relearn that.

But seeds are designed by God to open up, to germinate when the conditions are right for the plant to grow. And so Noah's getting his first indication that the earth will indeed sustain life again. Verse 12, he waited yet another seven days and sent out a dove, but it did not return to him again.

And I was just thinking, man, I can only imagine the anticipation that he was experiencing in that moment. You know, I already think it's coming back. I don't know how to give it another hour.

Let's not get our hopes up too high just yet. The picture is, would the bird find an environment suitable and sustainable for life outside of the ark, where it could gather food and build a nest and begin to live? And so this time the bird never comes back. Verse 13, it happened in the 601st year in the first month, on the first day of the month, that the water was dried up from the earth.

Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. First day, first day of the month, happy new year. Again, anachronistic.

He peels back the covering, whatever exactly that looked like. He looks out, he sees dry land. Now, probably things are still soggy.

There's still lots of puddles. Things are progressing nicely, but it's not for another 70 more days that the earth is said to be dry. We read in verse 14, in the second month on the 27th day of the month, the earth was dry.

The idea is now it was legitimately ready for habitation. There'd be enough grass, there'd be enough plant life to sustain the animals and the creatures as they would come off the ark. There'd be enough propagation of the foodstuffs that Noah and his family could begin to start life outside of the ark and eat from the produce of the ground.

And so all of this is depicted very personally as God showed care for Noah. He promised Noah he would bring salvation. He's doing it.

He's now prepared the earth for life. And so God now commands Noah to leave the boat. This is the second evidence of God's grace on display as the waters recede.

God not only considers Noah and remembers him and has promised him, but now God commands Noah to leave the boat. Verse 15, then God spoke to Noah saying, go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth that they may swarm on the earth and that they may be fruitful and multiply on the earth.

That would have been a wonderful message to receive from the Lord. There's no, it's time to get off the boat and get to work. It's time to go fill the earth.

Go do stuff. This echoes, of course, Genesis chapter one, where God commands man to be fruitful and multiply, to rule over the earth, to subdue the creation. So this is that original first creation mandate reiterated to Noah.

Noah, go do what Adam and Eve were supposed to do in the first place. Verse 18, So Noah went out and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth went out by their families from the ark.

So you have an exodus leaving the ark. You'd have had animals going out and pairing off and doing what animals do. They go, pop a bear and mama bear.

They're going to make a bunch of baby bears. And the process will continue. And soon creation will be teeming with animate life again, life multiplying.

I was not quite alive when Mount St. Helens erupted. But when that volcano erupted, it destroyed 86,000 acres of timber. It just obliterated wildlife.

And scientists were amazed because they did not expect life to return to the mountain as quickly as it did. In fact, it was just a matter of weeks. The vegetation was already growing out of the ash, out of all of the desolation.

Plants designed by God to pioneer the soil and break it up and add nitrogen so that new plants could come in and more easily grow. And as a kid, I have etched in my mind being up to watch whatever the science museum is up there, the videos. And you see all the decimation and you see all the destruction and everything obliterated.

And then the happy music starts and you start to see the wildflowers and you see the trees growing and everything teeming with life. And it's fresh and vibrant. Today, you just look around the earth and what do you see? We're not even able to count the kinds of organisms on the earth, let alone number them.

And so when you look on the earth, it testifies to the effectiveness of God's plan. That it was a good plan, that it was completely successful. That God originally created the earth, as we said, for man, he filled the earth with animate life.

He gave man a charge because of man's great wickedness. He destroyed the earth with a flood. And yet here we see backing up to the original intent and then God successfully bringing it about.

I don't know what Noah did when he first got off the ark. I was reflecting on that about this week and I thought, I'm pretty sure I know what I would do. I think I'd be hooping and hollering.

I'd probably kiss the ground. I think I would. I think I just, I know myself well enough.

I would be kissing the ground. But I imagine there was a somber note as well to step off the ark and have an earth that's quiet and desolate and empty. When you just imagine the silence, even from the created animals, there's not many of them on the earth.

And the reflections on all that's been lost on the one hand, recognizing, okay, God started over and that was a grace and a mercy and he dealt with wickedness. But at the same time, some of those are my friends and family members. I grieve over creatures made in the image of God who are gone.

And so I'm sure it was quite an experience for Noah coming off of the ark. Anticipation of what the future is going to bring as well as a somber note of all that has just happened. Not only that, but surely there would have been a lot of work to do.

Because I think if you're Noah, you get off the ark, what do you do first? And do you start a fire? Do you dig a latrine? Do you build a tent so you can get the tools off the ark and get them all organized? Because you're going to have a lot of work and construction to do and you need to get everything organized and set up or maybe build a shelter. Noah's first recorded activity is worship. Noah's first recorded activity is worship.

Look at verse 20. Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma.

The very first thing Noah does when he gets off the ark is worship. This brings us to our third point. Certainly it's going to highlight Noah, but it highlights God as well because God commends Noah's worship of him.

God looks favorably upon Noah's worship. And so I'm sure as the animals came off, there were those animals that weren't going to be penned or attended to, right? You kind of let the platypuses go and kind of do their thing. You let the crocodiles go and they can do their thing and the dinosaurs.

But when it came to the clean animals, the sheep and the goats and the cows, I mean, all right, we need to get some pens built here. Those animals are going to be domesticated. Now they're going to be used by man to accomplish work and for eating and for sacrificing.

And so Noah begins this process of slaughtering animals and offering them to the Lord. I think being a boy at one time and then raising boys, I just have this picture of, you know, they're separating animals and they have the clean animals that they have seven of. So there's enough to sacrifice.

And Noah telling his boys, they get to work, start getting the animals together to sacrifice. And he looks over and one of the boys zealously slaughtered one that came out on the twos and the pair saying, whoops, we just made a certain species go extinct because he got a little zealous there and didn't really think it through. These are clean animals, okay? So there's enough here.

There was enough brought on the ark that they can slaughter the animals and not go into extinction. And so the picture that you should see in your mind's eye coming off the ark is that Noah starts out by gathering the rocks, putting them together with his family to build an altar, to get it constructed. And he takes those animals that he's penned and a knife and he begins to get to work slaughtering.

I mean, this would have been a blood bath outside of the ark. And this is an expression of Noah's love for God. And it would have been a reminder to Noah's sacrifice always was that the cost of sin is death.

These animals weren't being sacrificed necessarily for atonement per se, but that's the very nature of the death of animals. It's a reminder of sin and a reminder of the need for atonement. And so Noah gets off the ark and what is in his heart to do first and foremost is to worship the Lord.

And I was gripped by this. I don't know about you, but sometimes I get so greed over my distracted, hurried, duplicitous heart. And I don't know what I would have done if I was Noah coming off the ark.

I trust that in my love and adoration for God, offering animal sacrifices would have been on my action list. But looking at my track record, I wonder would building an altar and worshipping God have been number one on the list. I could see there being a few other things I would attend to first.

Maybe get the flocks reproducing for a while before we start taking of those clean animals, kind of reserve some security for the future. Kind of an analyzer, maybe spend a lot of time

analyzing the best location for an altar so it doesn't get in the way of other things. Getting home-based established the way I wanted it.

So, you know, it gets off the ark and his first love is the Lord. It's his first desire to give thanks, to recognize that it was God that brought him through those waters of judgment safely. And we'll learn later in the sacrificial system, the parameters that God would give to Israel regarding their sacrifice.

It was very specific. What was it to be? You take of the best of your flock, you take of your first fruits and you offer to God your very best. So Noah's there.

These are all the animals on the earth. You're taking a goat. These are all the goats that exist on the planet.

And you pick the strongest and the most beautiful and the best and the healthiest of the bunch. And you say that one is the Lord's. It's a good question.

Ask ourselves, do you give God your first and your best? When you're thinking of your own worship, your own private devotion to the Lord, the way that you would commune with him, the attention that you give him, do you give your first and best to work and to entertainment and to leisure and pleasure? And then God gets your leftovers or does he get your first and your best? Noah gives the very best of his animals. And we know that he's giving of the best and giving of a right heart because we read in verse 21, and Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma. And this is not like Cain's sacrifice.

Cain's going through the motions. Cain's bringing the offering. The Lord is seeing right through it that your heart's not really in it.

So the picture here is not of a bloodthirsty and vindictive God who just loves seeing animals slaughtered as if that is the point. And now his anger has been abated because some animals died. God is pleased because he delights in the praises of his people.

God delights in the worship of his people. He loves that Noah loves him. And so Noah's doing not out of compulsion something, but he's doing what he wants to do when he gets off the ark.

If you think of it this way, there's all kinds of motives that mix us up in serving the Lord. Noah doesn't exactly have a lot of people to impress when he gets off the ark. He's already been with his wife and his three sons and his daughter-in-law for a year.

His three daughters-in-law for a year, okay? There's not a whole lot of secrets anymore in the family. Everybody's kind of knows where everyone's at. And so God is pleased with the arona.

We get to this and it's such a beautiful moment in the text of God remembering Noah. Noah coming off of the ark. Noah's very first act being worship, God being pleased with the worship.

And I don't know about you, but I happen to not watch movies a whole lot. I don't watch them very often. And it's kind of funny because Susie and I, when we do watch something, we don't have much of an appetite for drama and tension.

I think there's like enough drama and tension in real life that if we're gonna be entertained, it's like, and this just be really mellow, like really mellow. I mean, even watching like a kid's movie with the kids, it's like, that's about as much tension as we can handle. The store waiting for the story to get resolved, let alone some kind of action thriller.

But movies tell a story and we want to see the story. What we want to see it resolved, right? Do you like the movies where they leave it unresolved? There's a couple of threads hanging. No, we like no more cliffhangers, no foreboding future.

Everything wrapped up, everything tidy. And it doesn't always work that way. And this story is much the same.

You have the defilement and the corruption of the earth being wiped away. It's all clean now, praise God. The memories of mankind's wickedness has been washed away.

All of the altars, all of the temples, all of the things that man had built for his own namesake is gone. All of the places of immorality, not all of the money, all of the cities, all of the idols, it's all gone. It's been washed away.

It's all new, it's clean, it's fresh. There's one family on earth. It's led by a man who loves God.

He's righteous, he's blameless. His first act coming off the ark is worship. And in the moment of that, we think, oh, it's all resolved.

God is pleased, everything is as it should be. And then we read this foreboding cliffhanger thread that's now unresolved that comes and disrupts that beautiful moment. And Yahweh said to himself, second part of verse 21, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.

And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done. This is grace on display as the waters recede. It's our final point, God commits to preserve humanity.

God commits to preserve humanity. I mean, right in the midst of this beautiful moment, as the Lord is smiling upon Noah, as it were, and his offering, the Lord is saying to himself, I'm already making provision for next time. What's interesting here is it would appear that this moment wasn't stated to Noah.

God's speaking to Noah in verse 15, but here in verse 21, Yahweh is saying to himself, okay, inter-Trinitarian counsel here. And what does this show us? Well, this is God's compassion toward his creatures, God's disposition toward sinners, God's heart, we could say toward humanity. And this is the disposition that's going to sit behind God's covenant in Genesis chapter nine that we'll see throughout the rest of Genesis.

What does he vow? I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done. What's the gist of this glorious promise? Mankind is going to blow it again.

Mankind is going to blow it again. And here in the text, it's clear that it's even young people that have evil hearts and evil intentions. And you say, man, I don't really believe that.

I don't have kids. I'd invite you to come and volunteer, be a part of our Adventure Club Children's Ministry. You'll see the darkened hearts.

I mean, I love kids, but by nature, by nature, self-willed, self-focused, self-deceived, self-exalting. And so Genesis 8, 21 shows us that God is gracious to sinners in saying, I'm going to be patient. I'm going to endure.

And if you see the logic, it goes like this. This is God's commitment. If God were to operate in the fashion such that he destroys the earth every time it's filled with wickedness, then you might as well start construction on the next arc right now.

The best indicator of future performance is past performance. Why is it that God is not going to destroy the earth with the flood again? It's not because we learned our lesson so well. It's not because now we're starting with a righteous family or we can build upon what we learned in the past for the future.

It's not that technology is somehow going to advance man's understanding so he does a better job. No, the earth is not destroyed simply because God promises to be patient toward mankind, even when man deserves punishment. And this will be what sits behind God's entire redemptive program.

And so God promises not to destroy the earth again for a time. Look at verse 22. God's not going to destroy the earth again while all the days of the earth remain.

Seed time and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease. What is the Lord saying to himself? As long as the earth is here, I'm going to sustain it. As long as it's here, I'm going to keep it going.

You'll get seasons. You'll get days and night. You're even going to have a climate that will sustain life.

All of it's going to continue until it's time for this earth to be done away with. That's what God is saying here. He's promising to preserve humanity as he accomplishes his redemptive plan.

See, this redemptive plan is going to take time to unfold. God's going to call Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob. And then he's going to redeem his people out of Egypt.

And then he'll have the monarchy and King David in the exile and Jesus the Messiah and the apostles. And then the global mission of the gospel going forward to the ends of the earth. And so in order to accomplish that program, God's saying, you know what? Here's the promise I'm going to make.

When the wickedness of man gets great on the earth, this time I'm not going to destroy it. Next time I'm not going to destroy it. You're saying that that's the mercy of God.

People ask, why is the earth so wicked right now? Because God is being patient. Because he's accomplishing his redemptive plan. Because he promised to not do it until all of his elect are saved.

And so while all the days of the earth remain is an important clause to understand that at some point this earth will pass away. Jesus would say it over and over and over. Peter described it in this way.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be found out. He would go on and describe then the destruction of the earth. Revelation 6 14 says that the sky will be split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island will be moved out of their places.

The earth will wear out like a garment, Isaiah 51 6. As a leaf withers from the vine or one withers from the fig tree. So God is going to, of course, bring about the destruction of his enemies and the punishment of sin. But in Genesis 8, he's promising, I'm going to be patient.

I'm going to delay that day while I continue to accomplish redemption. So when you read Genesis 8, the message is to be loudly screaming at you as God's preserving grace. His preserving grace to Noah, his elect that ensures his salvation.

His very particular grace. And then his common grace to humanity that he's not destroying the earth at this time. Well, next week we'll pick up with Lord willing chapter 9 and we're going to begin to see how this covenant promise of God works throughout history and how we relate to it today.

Let's pray. Lord in heaven, thank you for your mercy and your grace. Thank you, God, for being long-suffering.

We know as humans, we can hardly bear even minor infractions of injustice without responding to correct them as we see fit. It's hard for us to be forbearing and patient and endure. And yet you display it so marvelously here.

Because you have a heart to save. Thank you, Lord, for these reminders. I pray that you would bless us as we meditate upon them in Jesus name.

Amen.