

Sin and God's Grace

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God is righteous and He will judge sin; however, He is also gracious and has provided a way of salvation.

MAIN PASSAGES: Genesis 6:5-9,17-22; 9:1,12-15

Many of us have the same solution for every computer problem we encounter: reboot. You may not have realized it before, but there's a "reboot" in the Bible. God doesn't call it that, of course, but that's what happened with Noah and the ark. Things in the world had gotten so rotten that God decided to "reboot" creation.



What are some places in this world you wish could be "rebooted"?

Group Time

Point 1: Sin grieves God and brings His judgment (Gen. 6:5-7).

⁵ When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, ⁶ the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. ⁷ Then the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them.”

How do you typically process the reality and impact of sin against God?



Transgressing God's Rules

Grieving God's Heart



How might our attitude toward sin change if we saw it not only as breaking God's rules but also as “grieving His heart”?

Sin, like a disease, had consumed all humanity. So God determined to stop the corruption, sending a flood to cleanse the earth. Our instinct is to wonder if God went a bit too far. But consider what you might do if someone you love were being ravaged by cancer. You would take radical measures, like chemotherapy, to cleanse them from the cancer. The cancer of sin grieves God and hurts His image bearers, so God was going to take a drastic step to wipe His creation clean and start over. And He was just to do so.



How can we pursue justice while trusting God with the burden of justice?

Point 2: Sin brings judgment, but God provides grace (Gen. 6:8-9,17-22).

⁸ Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

⁹ These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God.

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¹⁷ “Understand that I am bringing a flood—floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives. ¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of everything—from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds—will come to you so that you can keep them alive. ²¹ Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.” ²² And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

God’s image bearers had become exceedingly wicked, so God planned a flood to wash the world clean of their sin. But God chose to save one man along with his family to preserve His creative work. In this man—Noah—we see an example of God’s grace leading to the righteousness that comes by faith.

God Is Gracious: God’s nature is to delight in giving _____ to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through _____.



Why is it important that we keep grace and righteousness in the correct order?

The flood eventually came just as God said it would. Every man, woman, boy, and girl who rejected God perished. Noah was a preacher of righteousness through his faithful obedience for one hundred years (2 Pet. 2:5); this was an opportunity for others to repent. But as people so often do, they mistook God’s patience with His absence (see 2 Pet. 3:3-10). By the time they realized their error, it was too late.

Point 3: Sin will not halt God's creative purpose (Gen. 9:1,12-15).

¹ God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

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¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: ¹³ I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature.

The world is the loving creation of God, preaching to us that He exists and that He is beautiful, powerful, and good. Even in the most dramatic example of judgment in the Old Testament—the flood—we see God reaffirm His plan to bless the earth by filling it with people to cultivate it in worship of Him (Gen. 9:1). Even in one of humanity's darkest moments, God preserved a remnant because the jewel of His creation has always been people. If God refused to give up on people at their lowest, shouldn't we show similar compassion for others when we are tempted to give up on them?

Voices from the Church

“God wrote, ‘I love you’—he wrote it in the sky, and on the earth, and under the sea. He wrote his message everywhere! Because God created everything in his world to reflect him like a mirror—to show us what he is like, to help us know him, to make our hearts sing.”¹

—Sally Lloyd-Jones



Whom has God given you a passion to love as “precious in His sight”? What are some ways you can begin or continue to obey this passion?

Just as God was gracious to Noah and extended salvation to his family, so also God grants salvation by _____ to all who come by _____ into the family of His righteous Son, Jesus Christ.

My Mission

Because we are recipients of God's grace through Jesus, we proclaim the reality of God's righteousness and grace to others so they may join His family and be saved from the coming judgment.

- **How might you live differently if you consciously saw everyone as either on his or her way to everlasting joy with God or everlasting sorrow apart from Him?**
- **What can your group do to love and protect human life?**
- **How can you tell others about God's righteousness and grace in balance so they may respond in saving faith?**

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Genesis 6:1-7

We are not even a dozen chapters into the story of Scripture, and yet, God's judgment of sin has reverberated on nearly every page. God judged Adam, Eve, the serpent, and creation in Eden (Gen. 3) and then Cain for murdering his brother (Gen. 4). Then God's judgment echoes in the refrain "then he died" throughout the genealogy from Adam to Noah (Gen. 5). Now we see God's judgment about to be poured out to wipe humankind off the face of the earth.

Reading these chapters reminds us why so many view God—often referred to as the God of the Old Testament—as a God of anger. But if we look again, we see God's judgment is not without love and grace.

- God was gracious to Adam and Eve not to take their lives immediately and to cover their shame with clothing made from an animal—picturing a greater substitutional death to come.
- God graciously placed a mark of protection on Cain.
- In the genealogy, we read of one man, Enoch, who did not die, showing us that there is a way to escape sin's curse.

And even here, as God prepares to flood the world, we will see that He graciously brings one man and his family safely through the waters of judgment. Sin, death, and judgment have indeed saturated the story of Scripture, but so have God's love, mercy, and grace.



What do you find most difficult about the doctrine of God's judgment?



Voices from Church History

"You have not yet considered what a heavy weight sin is."²

—Anselm of Canterbury
(1033–1109)

Day 2: Read Genesis 6:8-22

We probably feel the desire to tip our cap to Noah. After all, he was blameless before his peers and he walked with God and was fully obedient to Him (vv. 9,22). But we cannot miss that all of creation—including Noah and his family—deserved God’s holy, righteous judgment in the floodwaters. Noah was not spared because of anything he had done but because of God’s grace alone. As such, Noah’s only proper response to God’s grace was complete surrender.

Think of it like this: Imagine you wake up in an ambulance and the EMT says, “You’ve been in a terrible accident. But we’ve got you. We’re going to save you. Just let us work.” They’re not asking you to get up and assist them but to surrender to them, to trust them.

You say, *Well, I’m mostly surrendered to God.* But there is no such thing as “mostly surrendered.” What good would it do to “mostly surrender” to the EMT? *Yeah, I’ll just pull out one or two of these cords. It’s no biggie. I’m still “mostly surrendered.”* In the same way, mostly isn’t enough for God—He wants our total surrender to Him, our loving and all-powerful God.



In what areas of your life is it most difficult to surrender fully to God? Why?

Day 3: Read Genesis 7:1-24

When we think of the events immediately leading up to God unleashing the flood, we usually focus on the animals coming to the ark in pairs. We wonder how they all got there and how they all fit, but we know they did. And then we usually jump to how the waters of the flood came from above *and* below and ponder the grandeur of a worldwide flood. But sandwiched in the middle of these two curiosities is a critical statement—after Noah, his family, and the animals were aboard the ark, God shut them in (7:16).

We don’t know how God performed this divine act of closing and sealing the ark’s door; however, understanding the *why*, not the *how*, is more important. This was God’s way of affirming that salvation truly belongs to Him. Noah may have built the vessel, but with an open door, it would not have weathered the storm and preserved his life and the lives of all the others onboard. Noah was saved not by his effort but by a gracious act of God—just as we are through Christ.



What are some ways you can tell others of God’s goodness to you?

Day 4: Read Genesis 8:1-22

All humanity, save Noah and his family, and every creature on earth, except those on the ark, had just perished in the flood of judgment. In God's appointed time, Noah exited the ark and stood on land for the first time in over a year. And the first thing Noah did was worship God by offering burnt offerings of some of every kind of clean animal and bird (8:20), a sweet-smelling sacrifice to the Lord.

Having witnessed God's judgment on humanity and experienced adversity for such a lengthy period of time, Noah was still able to find grounds to worship God. But it may be more accurate to say that Noah found reason to worship God *through* what he had experienced, not in spite of it. Being saved through God's judgment heightened Noah's awareness and gratitude for God's grace. That is why Noah worshiped, and why we do too.



What hardships have you recently experienced or are you currently experiencing in which you need to find grounds to worship God?

Day 5: Read Genesis 9:1-17

After Noah exited the ark, God made a covenant with him and all future generations that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. God then gave a sign—a visible confirmation—of the covenant in the form of the rainbow. Whenever God sees the rainbow in the clouds He forms, He remembers the permanent covenant He made.

But we shouldn't think of the rainbow as a string tied around God's finger. God is not absent-minded and in need of the rainbow lest He forget His promise and destroy the earth by flood once more. He is omniscient! God gave this sign not for Him as much as He gave it for us. When we look upon the rainbow, it should remind us of God's promise and, more profoundly, His faithfulness to keep His promises and His graciousness to give us what we do not deserve—life.



What are some other reminders in your life that reveal God's character?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Sin grieves God and brings His judgment (Gen. 6:5-7).
- Sin brings judgment, but God provides grace (Gen. 6:8-9,17-22).
- Sin will not halt God's creative purpose (Gen. 9:1,12-15).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



How have you seen God's grace in the midst of discipline and judgment in the world this week?



What are some circumstances in your community that grieve you to the heart, and how can the gospel of Jesus bring blessing and restoration?

Notes
