



2024 Weekly Devotions

Week of: March 4th - 10th

Sermon: March 3rd



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
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March 4

Genesis 1:28

I am sure that you know by now that we were created to bring glory to God through worship and obedience. I am so grateful that since Christ lived a perfect life and died on the cross to make atonement for our sins that we no longer must go to a temple with unsuspecting animals to be offered as sacrifice for our sins. I am thankful that we are now called to offer our very lives as “living” sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). It is not about animals being killed on an altar anymore, it is about us, having been redeemed, living our lives in obedience to the One who died for us for His glory and honor. We honor Him best with life surrendered to His Lordship. It was God’s plan all along that His people populate the earth so that together we can make much of our Creator. As we do this, He blesses us richly with His presence and His love.

Church family, when God created Adam and Eve and gave them the mandate to fill the earth, have dominion over it, and to establish a people who would know God and honor Him with faithfulness, obedience, and love, He revealed His plan for His people from then until the Second Coming of Christ. What we will continue to see on our journey through Genesis and the Old Testament, is that this plan was never surrendered. The various covenants that we will observe throughout Genesis will reveal to us God’s commitment to this original commission which was first revealed to us in Genesis 1:28 where it is written, “And God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over....’” Now, let us see the renewal of this commission to Noah after the flood.

The first thing you should notice is the repeating of the commission to Noah verbatim in Genesis 9:1. The blessing of God upon Noah and his sons is immediately followed by the same mandate given to Adam. Be fruitful and multiply is the commission of God for Noah to become a “people” for God. Noah is to serve in the roll that Adam first served in. He is to lead his family to have dominion over the rest of creation on God’s behalf (v. 2). The commission is repeated in verse 7 which is then followed by the establishment of the covenant that God makes with Noah.

The point that I want you to ponder and meditate upon today is the fact the God did not change the original plan to create a people who would honor and obey Him and in so doing, extend His glory to the ends of the earth. Like Adam and Eve, Noah and his descendants were to willingly and obediently live in such a way that God’s glory shines forth, His goodness is clearly experienced and known, and people bow to Him as God, King, and Lord because they love Him. Folks, we live today to do the same thing! Never forget that there is no tension or loss for us to live with His glory in mind instead of our own. The greatest gift that God can give us is Himself. There is no higher goal than knowing God and living in obedience to His Word and ways. In Him there is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11), peace, and contentment.

So, Noah and his family step off the ark onto drying ground and thus begins God’s original mandate for mankind all over again. I am reminded of the moment when Jonah realized he needed to obey God after his stay in the belly of a great fish. Jonah had thrown a fit, disobeyed, got disciplined, repented, and stepped back into obedience. The interesting reality is that God’s assignment for him was exactly the same. God did nothing but repeat what He had already commanded. He did the same thing in this case too. Adam had failed and now Noah was in the batter’s box, and it was his turn to take a swing at God’s purpose for man. We will see how he did later.

March 5

Genesis 9:2-11

As we pick up where we stopped yesterday, I want to consider today, not what was the *same* for Noah in comparison to Adam but what was very different. The commission of God and the reestablishment of the covenant was the same, but the world in which Noah and his family were to live was quite different. Hundreds of years had passed since God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Sin changed everything as it brought death, sickness, evil, separation, and brokenness into humanity. Evil was running rampant, murders had been committed, and judgment had fallen upon all of creation. The flood drastically changed the world that Noah stepped back into and the challenges he faced were real and detrimental to the mandate God had placed on his shoulders.

God had created man in His image and although that image was marred by sin, there remained that indelible imprint upon humanity. Noah and his family were to reflect God's righteousness and glory through their own faith and righteousness. This task would prove to be more than man could handle and would be challenged every step of the way by the world in which they lived. The "new Adam" is stepping not into paradise, but into a fallen world where he will face threats of various kinds. I believe we can learn much about these threats from chapter 9. For the first time, as far as we can know, man is given permission to kill and even eat animals. This time the dominion will include the freedom to fight back against that part of creation that now poses a threat to mankind. The lamb and the wolf are not looking to lie down together in Noah's new world. He will need to defend himself against predators that will likely eat him if he does not. The threat is real.

Not only will animals pose a threat to mankind, but mankind will also pose a threat to mankind which is why I believe God institutes at least a version of the death penalty here (v. 5b-6). This is to guard society from murder. Before the flood, it was solely God's responsibility and prerogative to take life, but here He gives man a bit of that responsibility so as to guard humanity and to keep people safe as murder would be deterred by this level of punishment. Murder is a capital offense because mankind was created in the image of God. I think it is worth noting here that even though, as I said before, the image of God in man is marred by sin, there is still enough of His image to require the loss of life for taking life that has been created in our Maker's image. Remember that the commission given to Adam and then to Noah was that man fill the earth with the glory of God which is another reason why murder is such an egregious offense to God. It is complete opposition to the purpose for the creation of mankind. A man who would sin against God's ultimate plan and purpose for creation is to be killed by man in defense of God's mandate. This is a special provision by God to protect His mission for man.

Finally, there seems to be a provision in this chapter that encourages Noah in a bit of an odd way. We have learned that God made provisions for the threat against animals and humanity itself, and here it seems that God is comforting Noah with the truth that He Himself will pose no threat to Noah either. Imagine Noah wondering if people go too far again, will God just make it rain and flood the earth again. That could make a fellow walk around with some serious angst. So, God promises Him that He will not do that ever again and uses the rainbow as a beautiful reminder of His promise to sustain the earth. The journey is going to be hard with the threats coming from many places, but God makes provision for Noah and for mankind to assure them that He will accomplish His purposes.

March 6

Hebrews 9:26

I want to build a bit more on yesterday's point to ponder by pausing to consider that even though judgment had come upon the earth by the hand of God because of sin, sin was not eradicated. Noah, his family, and those who were to come would be faced with the reality that sin is just as much a problem after the flood as it was before the flood. It should not surprise us when we read in the following chapters of Genesis that the depravity of mankind is evident and rampant in the world. In Genesis 11 we will see that mankind, apart from God, was trying to make a name for itself rather than God and experienced another measure of God's chastisement against them for sin. Even though God instituted a covenant with Noah and his descendants that certainly included grace, this did not guarantee righteousness and thus man's problem remained.

Since sin remained and the ongoing threats to righteousness were prevalent, we must wonder how God intended to accomplish His purpose of filling the earth with His glory through his frail image bearers. Surely God would not fail, so there had to be another answer. It helps us to always keep in mind the *Christotelic* nature of the Old Testament. That is just a fancy word that means that the Old Testament points to Jesus. Like a telescope, it brings Him into view. The New Testament is Christocentric which means that it "centers" on Jesus. He is clearly in view in the New while He is "pointed to" in the Old. How does that fit into our chapter for this week?

If we look at what Peter wrote in his 2nd letter, we find that he understood, and we should too, that the flood was a foreshadowing of the final judgment that is to come (2 Peter 3:6-7). This does not mean that the flood was not real judgment in space in time as recorded in Genesis 7 and 8. We too can learn from 1 Peter 3:20-21 that the ark is a foreshadowing of the final salvation that believers can find in Jesus Christ. From Matthew 24:37ff we see that once again the days of Noah are mentioned as typical of what it would be like when Christ came in judgment again. My point here is that when we think about the world in which Noah stepped into off the ark, and the obvious presence of sin and depravity that would continue to plague mankind, we must consider the truth that God had a plan for a greater salvation and deliverer for His people in the future. We know that God still hated sin and that no remedy was revealed yet.

Biblical scholars believe that the altar and sacrifice that Noah presented to God immediately as he departed from the ark, signified not only worship, but also the acknowledgment for the need of atonement. Obviously, God had communicated to Noah and those before him of the need to make sacrifices to God as worship and obedience. You might recall that as early as Genesis 4 we know that Cain and Abel knew they were to worship God through sacrifices. The burnt offering offered by Noah was for the purpose of making atonement which implies a need for forgiveness because of sin. In Leviticus 1:4 we learn that the burnt offering was for atonement. God received Noah's offering as a sweet-smelling aroma which led to the establishment of the covenant. I am not implying that God was not already going to reestablish His covenant prior to Noah's offering. I am simply saying that the altar and sacrifice of the clean animals pointed to a greater sacrifice that would come making atonement for God's people and appeasing the Father's rightful wrath against sin. In Hebrews 9:26b we get the answer: "He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Dear ones, Noah was left in a fallen and sinful world but that does not negate the fact that God's perfect plan was unfolding and would be fulfilled in Jesus.

March 7

Hebrews 4:14-16

Can you imagine God looking at you, your behavior, attitude, level of obedience, and love for Him and hearing Him declare you a righteous person? Go even further and imagine what it would have felt like to be one who “found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). Noah was described by God as righteous and blameless in his generation and one who walked with God (v.9). That would be rather impressive on your resume. Well, I hope that we will hear the Lord Jesus say to us at the end of our journey as mere humans on earth, “Well done my good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:23). Noah certainly lived a rather exemplary life according to these declarations from God’s Word. This might lead us to believe that he was perfect and certainly capable of doing a better job than Adam had done in the garden.

One might think that mankind was going to be alright now that judgment had come and the “bad” people were erased from the face of the earth. Well, it did not quite work out that way and if you understand depravity and the human heart, you would have never thought it would. Likewise, you should not trust your flesh or anyone else’s blindly in the fallen state of humanity. Noah was indeed all that God described him to be and was God’s man for the reestablished covenant that was made with him. We learn however, that our man of high character and morals was not sufficient in himself to see mankind to its God-given purpose.

In 9:20 from our text on Sunday, we learn that once Noah and his family established their new life on the earth, he became a keeper of a vineyard that he planted. Noah obviously had a pretty good season in his grape vineyard and somewhere along the line made himself some wine. One hot evening (I am using my imagination here) he began to consume more than he should and drank himself into unconsciousness. Yep! God’s man, the righteous Noah, got sloppy drunk and passed out in his tent. Not only did he pass out, but somehow, he ended up unconscious **and** naked on the floor. I am intentionally intending to highlight his behavior here to emphasize the FACT that no man is sinless and capable of measuring up to the holy standards of our God. He is holy, perfect, righteous, always good, and sinless and we are not, nor can we be in the broken and sinful bodies in which we now reside.

Please know that my goal is not to trash Noah. I am sure that he continued as a man who loved God, worshipped Him, and obeyed Him - for the most part. The problem is that the best any of us can do is “for the most part.” That leaves us in a terrible quandary because “for the most part” is not good enough in the eyes of God to earn access to His presence or forgiveness and pardoned from His righteous judgment seat. For that reason, we would remain lost and alienated from God if it were dependent upon us to cross every “T” and dot every “I” in terms of perfection and holiness. As wonderful as Noah was, he was still just a man and certainly could not be the One who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), which means there must be another. Noah proved to be a type of Christ who was a shadow of the One who was to come who would be the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world. There would be One who would come as our redeemer, deliverer, substitutionary sacrifice, and Savior. He would not fail in anyway and would do what Adam, Noah, Moses, David, and anyone else could never do. Noah was a mere mortal, Jesus was fully man AND GOD. Our King defeated sin, death, the grave, and the evil one and imputed the benefits of His victory to us. To God be the glory and no one else.

March 8

Ephesians 5:18

Noah obviously sinned when he became so drunk that he passed out and lay naked in his tent. Noah put himself in a position to become a laughingstock rather than the holy patriarch that he should have been. We should always remember that we put ourselves in vulnerable places with high likelihood that in a drunk, impaired mindset, we are likely to make poor choices leading to sin, embarrassment, and poor examples for those around us. Many poor decisions have been made under the influence of alcohol rather than the Spirit. Examples and applications are plentiful throughout the Bible and certainly God has placed this story in here for our edification and warning. Think for a moment how Jesus spoke of the woman who placed the two coins in the offering plate even though she was poor. He spoke of her and it is recorded in the Bible for all to read and remember her faithfulness forever. Likewise, God chose to include this sad moment in Noah's life for us as well. Be careful how you live. You never know for what you may be remembered.

I want you to understand today that as parents, we should always be mindful of the lessons we are teaching or modeling for our children and that they are, without question, impacted by the way we live our lives. Having said that, it is sad that Noah's drunkenness put his son Ham in the circumstance to see his father in such a light. Proverbs 20:7 has always been a favorite of mine. It says, "The righteous who walks in his integrity - blessed are his children after him." That has served as motivation through the years for me to try to be godly in the eyes of my children. God knows I have not always been, but I have tried.

Now, it is painfully clear as well that this incident involving Noah's intoxication, served to reveal the condition of his son Ham's heart. We need not doubt that he was already of the nature to make fun of his father's momentary failure rather than do all he could to preserve his good dad's character and reputation. Surely Noah made a mistake in this instance, but many were the moments when he pleased the Lord by his obedience and leadership within his family and community. In contrast to Ham's behavior, we see his brothers Shem and Japheth. When Ham approaches them to make fun of their father and to make a mockery of his sin and shame, these two sons grab a blanket and walk backwards, so as to not see their father in such a wayward and embarrassing way. They enter his tent, without looking at his nakedness, and cover his shame with the blanket. They do not make sport of him and certainly don't join in with their brother's sin and folly. In both instances, you get a clear view of the condition of each young man's heart and spirit.

I imagine that this may be one of the places in the Bible where you may be apt to question the severity of the punishment doled out against Ham and his offspring to come. Before you do that, remind yourself of the reality of the omniscience of God. He is all-knowing and always just in his granting of both mercy and justice. God knew everything about the condition of Ham's heart just as He did the condition of Cain's when he punished him. Never forget that you and I can only see the surface whereas God can see the heart and its motives. Ham's disrespect for his father should not be taken lightly nor should his desire to disgrace another caught in sin, and to involve others in his degradation. His heart was wicked enough to warrant the punishment and Noah understood that God's judgment supersedes his own relationship with his son. We must never disregard holiness and obedience in favor of family connections. We must not wink at sin where God does not, even under our own roof.

March 9

2 Samuel 7:12-13; Acts 17:30

This is a bit of a strange verse to begin with today, but I think it will help make my point that during the days of Noah, after the flood, God extended amazing grace to humanity. Luke recorded that the “times of ignorance God overlooked” (Acts 17:30). There are plenty of times throughout the history of man when God did not impose the judgment upon them that they deserved. We certainly see that in the days of Noah. I hope it will encourage your hearts as you ponder just how patient and compassionate God is to us in all our frailties, weaknesses, and even our sin. This is demonstrated clearly in the death of His own Son on the cross to atone for OUR sins. Learn to hold everything else in your life up against the backdrop of the cross to maintain your clarity in His dealings with you.

All the way back in Genesis 6:8 we read that Noah “found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” Folks that is grace! When Noah lay naked and drunk in his tent, God extended grace to him as well. God said in Genesis 8:21 that he knew “the intentions of a man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Rather than judgment, He extends grace, and established a system for atonement (8:20-22). God knew that the sinners that stepped off the ark would create more sinners to walk on the earth. Again, He extended grace. Man is sinful, but God is gracious. We hope that you will see the patience of God and the grace of God extended throughout the cycles of humanities failures to carry out God’s plan for His creation. The passage for today tells us that the times of ignorance have passed, and it is now time to repent and follow Jesus.

Sometimes I have wondered why God even bothered with procreation after the flood. He already knew the depths to which humanity could fall and knew that they would again. Maybe it would have been easier, cleaner, holier if we just didn’t bother with people. But we must remember that mixed in with the mess, there would be blessings and joys and wonder that we could not know without people. I think about the joys of watching my children and now grandchildren serve the Lord and grow up right in front of me. They are a huge part of the grace and blessings that God has given me. The pain is worth the tremendous privilege and happiness of sharing life with them and other precious saints of God along the way.

Then of course there is the beautiful and precious promises that God is working out a perfect plan in the midst of our current chaos - just as He always has. It is through procreation that eventually one of David’s offspring will have a kingdom that God will establish forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). I find great solace in the fact that when the world seems chaotic, there is a tremendous peace in knowing that God is calmly and purposefully unfolding His perfect plan. Adam was failing and God already had the Lamb in place. Humanity was spiraling into sin and God already had the protoevangelium worked out. Israel was disobedient, Solomon was worldly and lustful, the future kings were evil, and yet God was moving history towards Jesus. He was patient, compassionate, and gracious for so long as the creation rejected their Creator and sought other lovers.

His love never grew cold, His commitment to His purpose and plan, and His establishment of a people that would someday be - never waned! He did not panic, and He did not worry. He guided His chosen ones through chaos and continues to do it today. Where sin abounds, His grace abounds more. I have heard people say, “Don’t bring children into this crazy world.” Why not? Our great God is overseeing it all and His plan contains boundless blessings and joy in the middle of it all.

March 10

Genesis 49:10-11; 1 Peter 2:9

I hope that you are beginning to see the history that is written in Genesis and later in Exodus as a cycle of creational beginnings and new-creational beginnings that never seem to fulfill their goal. The goal has always been the obedience of the people of God who glorify Him and are rewarded with the privilege of living in a glorified and perfect land blessed and as a blessing to others. For Adam, it would have been the Garden of Eden and for Noah a recreated earth, and later for Israel the promised land. In all three cases, the figure(s) failed to reach the ultimate goal.

Let's make it crystal clear as we walk through these cycles of Genesis. Adam and Eve were part of an original sinless creation in Eden that could have ended in a consummated eternal glorified state. By the way, the Garden of Eden was a type of paradise but it was not yet heaven. They were put there to fulfill a commission and then experience consummation with the Godhead as they reached the zenith of their relationship with God; that never happened. Then it was Noah's turn.

Noah and his family emerged from the ark after the chaos of the judgment (flood), and was given the same commission as Adam was given. His world was somewhat of a renewed creation that was designed to end in the same type of consummated eternal and glorified condition as well. If Noah and his progeny had worked as prophets, priests, and kings on the earth in submission to the Lord, then the blessings would have come, the curses stopped, and heaven established; that never happened. Now as we jump ahead to Israel as a nation, we will see the same cycle repeated.

Israel was formed to be "people" for God. You could say that they were a corporate Adam. Their chaos was the four hundred year slavery in Egypt from which they were delivered to be a people for God. They were given a land and were commissioned to bless the nations of the world by imaging God amongst the peoples of the world; that never happened. The rest of the story unfolds throughout the Scriptures ending with the One, the Lord Jesus, who finally came to fulfill what no man or nation could do before Him. Every failed cycle before Christ revealed the need for One who was more than fallen man who would accomplish God's perfect plan of redemption.

The covenants that Pastor Aaron wrote about last week were all intended to assure God's people that He would someday fulfill His plan. Seeing that we know God cannot lie and that His perfect plans will always come to fruition, the only other alternative to the failure of man to carry out the plan was that God would do it Himself which is exactly what He did in Jesus Christ. According to Genesis 49:10-11, the prophesied King from Judah would come to lead His people to do what Adam should have done. It is quite thrilling as you read the Bible now with this beautiful thread of redemption in mind. Someday dear ones, we will reach the fulfillment of the original mandate, dating all the way back to the Garden of Eden, as we sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb where our relationship with God will finally be consummated and all will be as it should have been all along. Jesus has come and He will come again.

We are busy now trying to, by the power of the Spirit, live as Kingdom people. We have been endowed with the Spirit, we have the whole counsel of God's Word, and we have the Son as our Advocate in heaven as we have the Spirit with us here on earth (1 Pet. 2:9). God has given us all that we need to image Him well as we bless others. We need Jesus as much as anyone throughout history, but we must remember that we have Him. Let us do our part to carry out God's commission as prophets, priests, and kings as ambassadors for our Savior here on earth until He returns.