

A WORLD PURGED

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God is righteous to judge sin, but He is also gracious to provide a way of salvation.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Genesis 6–9

+ **SETTING:**

Once upon a time, God saw all that He had made and called it good. Then God saw what His creatures did and called it evil. The first sin involved disbelieving the judgment of God was real. Now just a few chapters later, judgment comes. God's judgment, however, is not an end to all things. In His gracious hands, judgment becomes the means of salvation.

DAY 1

READ:

Genesis 6:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 6:5-8

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #46: THE WORLD OPPOSED TO GOD

There are times in Scripture where the term “world” refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan’s control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

God cares about human sinfulness. Genesis 6:6 says as much: The sinfulness of humankind on the earth “grieved” Him. The same language is used a few other times in the Bible. Isaiah, looking ahead to the day of the Lord’s vengeance, stated, “But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isa. 63:10). The apostle Paul, in talking about turning from sin as believers, commanded Christians in Ephesians 4:30 not to “grieve” the Holy Spirit.

Every sin is ultimately against God. In Psalm 51, David confessed his sins that certainly affected other people, including Bathsheba, Uriah, and the entire nation of Israel, but he sinned first and foremost against God (Ps. 51:4).

When we sin, Scripture sometimes uses the language of “grieving” God. It’s uncomfortable for many of us to speak about God in this way. Isn’t He sovereign over all? Isn’t God above us, unable to be affected by what we, His little creatures, do down here on earth? Well, yes, God is sovereign, and no, we cannot truly bring harm to God. Yet He takes genuine, personal interest in His creatures. God cannot change His perfect character and infinite being, and He also couldn’t love His creatures any more than He already does. The God of the Bible is not the god of the deists, who sits a comfortable distance away from his people, watching disinterestedly. The true God is a God who draws near (Ps. 34:18), who makes His dwelling with humanity (Ex. 29:45), who sends His Spirit to live in the hearts of His people (1 Cor. 3:16). Our sin is not nothing to God; it is a grievous affront to His deity, to His grace, to His Godhood. But our sin is also no surprise to Him.

Affirming how the Bible speaks to us about God’s grief over sin is not a reason to run from Him but a reason to run to Him. He will forgive. He has mercy and grace for all who sin against Him. His big heart is big enough to accept you back, even when you have grieved Him.

What sins do you need to see as “God-grieving,” and in what ways do you need to repent today?

DAY 2

READ:

Genesis 6:9-22

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 6:9-22

NOTES

We all know what it's like to be sinned against. However, unlike our tendency to lose compassion toward someone who sins against us, God remains personally invested in and unchangeably compassionate toward a world actively sinning against Him.

As wickedness increased on the earth, God was grieved, so He determined to no longer overlook the sinfulness of humanity. He vowed to wipe humankind off the face of the earth (Gen. 6:7). His holiness cried out for justice, and rightly so. Justice is the cry of the heart sinned against.

The Bible says the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Death was the original promised consequence, so we can't say God didn't warn us. Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree knowing their lives were on the line. They didn't listen, and we don't listen either. We are all sinners. No one is good (Rom. 3:10). Our badness requires God's justice. Yet God doesn't desire that any of the wicked should perish (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). So what can be done? How can God punish sin while granting life to the sinner? How can justice be satisfied while sin remains?

There are two options, and Noah's story shows them both. The first option is a wiping out of all the sinners: death and destruction. The second option is a sacrificial pardon of the chosen: life through death. All but Noah and his family received the former. The world was wiped clean.

Yet sin still remained in Noah's heart. What would God do next? He would accept a sacrifice for sin. Years and years after Noah came one of Noah's descendants—God in the flesh. He had the power to judge the earth. Instead, He was judged on our behalf. Jesus became the sacrifice for sin so that the promise made so long ago to Noah could be given to all God's children.

How does the gospel help us marvel at the grace of God in Noah's story? Write out the connections you see.

DAY 3

READ:

Genesis 7

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 7:1-5

NOTES

What does it mean that Noah found favor with the Lord (Gen. 6:8)? Did Noah do something amazing that caught God's eye? Was he just a really great guy at heart? What made Noah deserving of such an honor?

The answer is simple: nothing!

Nothing in Noah was deserving of God's favor. Noah was a sinner, and his sin was disgusting to God. In fact, if Noah deserved anything from God, it was death like everyone else. Yet Noah was saved. Noah was brought into the ark and passed through the waters and walked again as the new "first man" in the new age God created for humanity. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among all the people on the earth at that time (6:9), but he still wasn't deserving of a single good thing from God.

Yet God blessed Noah anyway. How do we explain such a thing?

People often read the Old Testament as the story of the God angry at the world for sin. That's partially true but tragically incomplete. The Old Testament is also the story of the gracious God showing steadfast love to His fallen creation. The only explanation for Noah's salvation is the grace that God poured out on him. God was angry at the world, yet He was gracious and merciful to Noah. Every person who has ever lived is looking for the kind of favor Noah received from God. Not everyone is aware of it, of course, but every heart longs for it (Eccl. 3:11). So how do you get it?

The favor of the Lord comes not from what we do but from what Jesus has done. The way into the smile of God goes through the anguished face of Christ on the cross. You can't buy it. You can't earn it. You can't achieve it. You can't even deserve it. You can only receive it with the empty hands of faith.

Have you accepted the grace of God found in Jesus Christ? Who can you pray for that needs to hear this message?

DAY 4

READ:

Genesis 8:1-14

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 8:1-14

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The story of Noah and the ark shouts to all those who persist in living apart from God about what is to come. It invites all to accept God's offer of protection and safety found only by being united to Christ."¹

-Nancy Guthrie

Don't you hate when a question is answered with "Maybe"? It is about as ambiguous as you can get. It's totally non-committal. It leaves the questioner without something to grab on to. It might happen. It might not. Time will tell.

Many of us look at the promises of God and see not a yes or no but a maybe. Will God bless me? Maybe. Will He forgive me? Maybe. Will I really be saved? Maybe.

But there are no maybes with God. The Bible says that God's promises are sure because God cannot lie (Heb. 6:17-18). God's oaths are not cosmic maybes; they are rock-solid assurances.

As the story of the Bible progresses, the record shows that all of God's promises come true. People doubt His word. Prophets question Him. His people stray from Him. Kings worship idols instead of Him. But God remains true to His word. There are no promises of God that end in a question mark.

Noah learned this during the flood. God promised the rain would come, and it did. God promised the world would be wiped out, and it was. God promised He would save Noah and his family, and God did. Every promise God made to Noah came true.

But God didn't stop there. He made promises not only to Noah but also to Noah's descendants. He would never again cause such a disaster. He hung up His battle bow in the sky as a reminder (Gen. 9:12-17).

There are no maybes with God, only assurances. You can take hold of them today without fear. All the good things God has promised His children are coming, just as sure as the morning sun. How do we know? All His promises are "Yes" in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

What steps can you take to renew your confidence in specific promises God has made to us in His Word?

DAY 5

READ:

Genesis 8:15–9:29

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 8:15–9:17

NOTES

After the flood, when Noah de-boarded the ark and offered his burnt sacrifice, God said a surprising thing: He would never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though they continued to be sinful (8:21). The human heart was still evil? Was the flood not an event to cleanse the world? Noah was righteous; how can sin still remain?

Wiping the earth clean was God's just judgment on the sin of the world. But when God put His favor on Noah and determined to save him and his family, He knew sin would remain because it was deep inside them all. They were born with a sinful nature, just as their parents were. Noah was a sinner, and that's part of why his first act after stepping off the ark was building an altar and offering burnt offerings on it (8:20).

Noah's burnt offerings were a sacrifice for his sin and his family's sin. It was the new way in the world—a way later explained more fully in Leviticus 1—by which God would cleanse and forgive His people. By accepting the sacrifice, God was counting the death of the animals as payment for the sins of His people. This was the plan from the start. It was the reason for the greater number of clean animals on the ark with Noah (7:2-3).

From Noah onward, the Old Testament shows the blood of goats and bulls making atonement for the sins of the people in a temporary and provisional way. Sin requires a blood sacrifice, and God established a way for His people to “see” and receive His forgiveness.

But it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins completely (Heb. 10:4). Only a human death can atone for humanity's sins. So Jesus came, years and years after Noah's sacrifice, to be the sacrifice for Noah and all his children, to save them through His blood and usher them into a new age where sin no more remains and peace is forever found.

How does Noah's story help you see the need for a sacrifice for sin?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The anger of God is not a disturbing emotion of His mind, but a judgment by which punishment is inflicted upon sin. His thought and reconsideration also are the unchangeable reason which changes things; for He does not, like man, repent of anything He has done, because in all matters His decision is as inflexible as His prescience is certain. But if Scripture were not to use such expressions as the above, it would not familiarly insinuate itself into the minds of all classes of men, whom it seeks access to for their good, that it may alarm the proud, arouse the careless, exercise the inquisitive, and satisfy the intelligent; and this it could not do, did it not first stoop, and in a manner descend, to them where they lie."²

-Augustine (354-430)

POINT 1: God declares that wickedness will bring judgment (Gen. 6:5-7).

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #46: THE WORLD OPPOSED TO GOD

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How does the world's understanding of sin differ from the way the Bible treats it?

God is " _____ " by human sinfulness, and He acts to end and punish sin because it damages and _____ what God created as good.

POINT 2: God offers grace as the means to escape judgment (Gen. 6:8-9,13-14,17-22).

Noah found favor in God's sight, not by his own doing but by God's _____ through his _____.



What would it look like to "walk with God"?

God's offer of grace required Noah to build an ark. Noah _____ God's warning and provision and was _____ to do what God commanded.

POINT 3: God provides salvation through judgment (Gen. 7:11-13; 8:15-16,20-22).

God's _____ against wickedness came upon the earth, just as God had said it would. And Noah and his family entered the ark, trusting that it would _____ them, just as God had said it would.



How would you respond to someone who said a worldwide flood would be overkill to address the problem of wickedness on the earth?

God saved Noah's family in spite of their sin. Seeking _____ for their sin and signifying their affection for God, Noah offered a sacrifice, which _____ the Lord. This too was salvation through judgment.



How does this true account of the flood help to prepare us for the gospel of Jesus Christ?

MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus has provided salvation from our sins as an act of grace toward us, we declare the gospel with great humility and compassion toward sinners in great need of a Savior.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways you fail to take sin seriously?
- **HEART:** Why is it important to show compassion to those around us, and what are some ways we can do that?
- **HANDS:** How do you need to offer yourself to God today in worship and service?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Be killing sin or it will be killing you."³

-John Owen (c. 1616-1683)