

Theme: In His grace, God gave His covenant promise to preserve creation and humanity, renewing the covenant of creation and establishing human government to restrain evil and promote the common good through this age until the final judgment.

I. Intro - A Tale of Two Cities

- A. Augustine's *The City of God* - his magnum opus on the history of humanity
- B. Traces eternal city of God & temporal city of man
- C. These two cities are seen in the covenant of redemption as the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman
- D. Their story is seen in Genesis & all Scripture
- E. Early chapters culminate in Noah
- F. What is the Noahic covenant & how does it apply to us?

II. Background: A Tale of Two Cities

- A. The tale of the two lines of seed/offspring (evil vs godly)
 - 1. Cain leaves Yahweh's presence & his line is traced down to the 6th generation before Seth is even mentioned (Genesis 4:17-24)
 - 2. When Seth is first mentioned, he has a son and men begin to call on the name of the LORD (Genesis 4:25-26)
 - 3. In the 7th generation from Adam, the two lines are most separated
 - a. Cain - Lamech boasts about his murders & evil (Genesis 4:23-24)
 - b. Seth - Enoch walks with God and is taken to heaven (Genesis 5:21-24)
 - 4. This is the covenant of redemption coming to pass!

B. The tale of the destructive spread of sin

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. Genesis 6:5–6

- 1. Man is not just a sinner - great wickedness
- 2. Man does not occasionally sin - every inclination of his heart is towards evil
- 3. God's heart is filled with pain
 - a. Anthropomorphism - but making a point!
 - b. We are destroying creation and ourselves and turning away from God completely
 - c. The exact opposite of the covenant of creation!

C. The tale of judgment and salvation

So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth — men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Gen 6:7–8

- 1. God had warned humanity that rebellion and sin produces death (Covenant of Creation)
- 2. The Holy God judges sin of necessity
- 3. The promised punishment is staggering in its scope - sin causes the reversal and undoing of creation. All is returning to the watery chaos of Genesis 1:2.
- 4. **BUT** Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of YHWH. God has promised to save and He will! (Covenant of Redemption).

III. God's Covenant With Noah

A. God makes a covenant with Noah

But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. Genesis 6:18

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you..." Genesis 9:8–9

1. This is the first time the word 'covenant' is used
2. Sin had brought judgment, but God saves Noah

B. This covenant is built upon the covenant of creation

1. Be fruitful and increase (Genesis 1:28; 9:1,7)
2. Rule over the animals (Genesis 1:28; 9:2-3)
3. Humanity is the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6)
4. Family, animals, labor all part of both stories
5. Noah is the 10th generation from Adam listed
 - a. 10 is a number of completion in Scripture
 - b. There are 10 tables of generations in Genesis
6. Noah is derived from the word meaning 'rest'
7. All of this is a literary linkage of the two covenants

C. This covenant promises to preserve humanity and creation to fulfill God's covenant purposes

1. God promises to maintain creation (preservation)

"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Genesis 8:22

- a. God will not let humans sin to cause everything to be destroyed
 - b. God promises that the cycles of days and seasons, weather and agriculture will be preserved throughout this age.
 - c. This is not an excuse for human apathy in caring for creation, but it is a promise that God's common grace will maintain human existence.
 - d. This is also the basis for the stability of the universe and thus our ability to study & develop it today
2. God establishes human government to restrain evil
Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. Genesis 9:6
 - a. This is the covenantal basis for human government
 - b. Sin had spread so rapidly and destructively that it must be restrained; government's main purpose is to restrain evil and encourage righteousness
 - c. Paul develops this idea in Romans 13
Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ²Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:1–4
 1. Every authority is established by God - they are part of His covenantal provision for us

2. Government exists to commend the good and punish evil.
3. They even have the power of the sword - capital punishment
4. They fall short - but they are better than anarchy!

d. The basis for all of this is the image of God

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; **for in the image of God has God made man.** Genesis 9:6

1. We are the image of God - so murder must be punished severely
2. We are the image of God - so we are able to execute a measure of justice properly
3. As the image of God, we are to work to restrain evil and to promote righteousness and the common good

3. This covenant undergirds God's common grace

Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." Genesis 9:16

- a. A covenant with all humans and all creatures - not just the redeemed. This is common grace.
- b. Common grace is "every favor of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin cursed world enjoys at the hand of God." (John Murray)
- c. The word common here means something that is common to all people and is not restricted to believers or to the elect only.
- d. Common grace is what restrains the effects of sin enough so that we do not utterly destroy everything.
- e. This allows God's covenant purposes in the covenants of creation and redemption to be fulfilled

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I understand God's common grace?

1. This covenant reinforces the covenant of creation
2. This covenant teaches us of God's common grace
3. It is imperative for Christians to relearn this important doctrine
4. God cares for and works with even those who deny and reject Him.
5. God has established government and human cultures to restrain the effects of sin and to promote human flourishing.
6. Like everything else in this sin ravaged world, government and culture will fall short of God's intent and design, but even the worst ones are far better than anarchy and barbarism.
7. As Christians, we must work with unbelievers to build our culture and government and to promote the common good.
8. This is why God told his people in exile to pray and work with their neighbors for the common good. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Jeremiah 29:7
 - a. Some false prophets were telling them not to "unpack their bags" and become part of the culture.
 - b. God tells them to pray for their place of exile and to work with others for the good (shalom) of the city of their exile.

c. This is what Daniel and his companions, and Mordecai and Esther did, even holding high positions in pagan governments.

9. Christians who do not understand this have been tempted to either totally separate the two kingdoms/cities or to merge them into one.

10. Because of this covenant and God's common grace, we are members of both the City of God and the City of Man, and we must work unbelievers to help the City of Man to flourish as much as it can.

11. Christians who totally separate the two cities become isolationists and suffer when the culture falls into decay; Christian who merge the two cities try to dominate politically and only end up undermining the Gospel by conflating it with temporal political and cultural issues and trends.

12. Do I understand God's common grace, so that I realize even unbelievers can be used by God to produce incredible culture and establish good government? (Note Cain's line did this more than Seth's line in Genesis 4-5).

13. Am I more prone to isolation or conflation?

B. Do I understand God's judgment & saving grace?

1. This story reminds us of the destructive nature of sin, and that God will judge sin!

2. The New Testament uses this story as a warning of the coming final judgment

a. Matthew 24:36-41; Luke 17:26-27

b. 2 Peter 3

3. God is crystal clear: all face His fiery judgment

4. Just as we can falsely conflate the two cities/kingdoms, we can also falsely conflate common grace and saving grace.

5. On that day, common grace will not save!

6. No amount of gifts, of working for the common good will pass the bar of God's judgment of sin.

7. The only way to be saved is to be in the Ark - Jesus Christ! (See 1 Peter 3:18-22)

8. Are you in the Ark of Salvation, Jesus Christ!

9. Look to Him for salvation today!

10. If you are a believer, are you burdened for those who are not in the Ark?

11. We must share the Gospel while there is time - no matter the ridicule or rejection it brings!

C. The Table of Saving Grace

The Covenant of Preservation

Genesis 6:17-18; 9:1-11

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Communion

Revelation 22:21

Teaching keywords: Covenant; common grace; government; creation; sin; judgment

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.
Revelation 22:21

I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. Genesis 6:17–18

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.

²The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands.

³Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

⁴ “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. ⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. ⁷ As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by

the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” Genesis 9:1–11