

Press On! God Will Still Bless

Genesis 9:1-7

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Introduction:

Last time in our sermon series from Genesis, we saw how God remembered Noah!

- The waters had covered the earth as they had done before God formed the dry land to prepare the earth to be inhabited,
 - and poor Noah and his family were in this ark, surrounded by water, pent up with a bunch of animals, for a whole year.
 - It was frankly not a very pleasant place to be.
 - It was worse than being lost at sea because there was nothing but sea.
- But we saw that chapter 8 opened by telling us that God remembered Noah—
 - He had no intention of leaving him and his family on the ark forever...
 - We saw how the Lord graciously caused the waters to recede and the dry land to appear so that the earth could once again support life.
 - He did all of that for Noah and his family.
 - We also saw how Noah patiently trusted God to deliver him and to cause the waters to recede...
 - He showed his faith by sending out birds to see if it had happened yet,
 - and he showed his patience by only sending them out once per week, and by waiting for God's command to disembark...
 - God had commanded him to get on the ark, so he waited for God to command him to get off.
- And we saw as well how Noah was very grateful to the LORD for remembering him and his household...
 - The first thing Noah did when he got off the ark—as busy as he would have been—was build an altar and offer sacrifices of dedication and thanksgiving.
 - He wanted to start out right as he went into the new, untraversed world.
 - By offering a burnt offering, he showed that he understood that God required total dedication from him and from his family—
 - dedication of which they would fall short and so that animal was offered to show that he needed both an atonement and a substitute who was totally dedicated—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—the one we now call Jesus.
 - Noah made faith a priority because he did not want the world to return to the wicked state it had descended to that brought about the flood.

As we move into chapter 9, we will see how the LORD encourages Noah to move forward in fulfilling His call to replenish the earth with godly people of faith.

- In the part we will be looking at today—the first 7 verses—we will see how God blessed Noah to enable him to fulfill God’s calling in this untraversed new situation...
- And next week, Lord willing, in verses 8-17, we will see how the LORD gave Noah assurance of His plan to bless him and his seed by establishing a covenant with him and with the earth.

So please listen now as I read to you from our text for this week, Genesis 9:1-7:

- Give careful attention because this is the word of God.

Gen 9:1-7: So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵ Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. ⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.”

May the Lord bless to us His holy and infallible word.

Now you need to realise how strange it must have been for Noah and his family to step out into a totally strange world with the animals that were on the ark.

- There was nothing familiar...we don’t know how far they were transported, but even if they had been right near their village or city,
 - nothing would have remained—all the familiar places were wiped out...
 - And how lonely it would have been—to be the only people in whole wide world, venturing out to start over again with a bunch of wild animals that had just been released.
 - What were they to do?
 - What did God want with them now?
 - What would become of them?
 - What was their calling in this strange new situation?

I. See here that God restates His original intention for man whom He created.

- A. He tells Noah that he still wants him to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth!
 - He still wants that of us today too...
 1. This means lots of children.
 - a. Some of the idolatrous accounts of the flood say that the gods were upset with man for multiplying...
 - They complained that man was making too much noise...
 - This is not surprising because those who worship idols worship demons,
 - And demons are always anti-child—

- Satan is a murderer and he does not like for man to multiply.
 - Man is made in God's image, and Satan does not like that.
 - We see some of this sentiment today where there is unwarranted fear about over-populating the earth.
 - Many western nations have practically annihilated their own people and are having to sustain themselves with immigrants.
- b. We find that the Lord, all the way through the Bible, is not like that at all.
 - He is always calling us to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth.
 - As we do, He provides for our needs.
 - We show our lack of faith when we give way to fear.
- But there is one important qualification to keep in mind...
- 2. The Lord does not simply want a lot of people—He wants a lot of godly people.
 - a. When the LORD first created us in His own image, we beautifully represented Him as His image because we were godly...
 - We were a portrait of Him in human form the way Jesus was when He came in human flesh...
 - We were beautiful image bearers of God who were full of love and service to each other, and who were zealous worshippers of God and who wanted nothing else but to please Him.
 - b. God does not want a lot of wicked rebellious people such as multiplied before the flood...
 - That is not what He is calling for when He says, “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”
 - Of course He does not want the earth to be filled with wickedness again, does He?
 - He wants it to be filled with godly people who are redeemed by faith in His promises.
 - c. This means that we are not only to have children and to provide what is needed for their bodies...
 - but also that we are to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD...
 - We are to point them to God's promise to redeem those who trust in Him, and we are to teach them how to live for God and we are to correct them when they go astray...
 - And it also means that when we see people—be they children or adult—who are not godly,
 - we are to evangelise them—to point them to Jesus Christ, the way of life, so that they might become His people, a godly people...

TRANS> It is godly people that God wants the earth to be filled with!

- That is what He called Noah to do and that is what He calls us to do today when He says “be fruitful and multiply!”
 - We all have roles to play whether as parents, or as encouragers of parents, or as those who evangelise or those who encourage others to be godly.
 - And of course our first responsibility is to be godly ourselves...
 - Don’t be dragging around with some kind of half-baked service to the Lord!
 - He wants the earth to be filled with godly people who are walking with Jesus!

B. But how easy it is to get discouraged!

1. We can look back in history and see the failure of the human race to fill the earth with godly people.

- Noah and his family had the memory of the great wickedness that filled the earth in the days before the flood to discourage them...
 - How could they do any better than Adam and Eve, and even those like Seth had done?
 - Many children had been brought forth to be sure, but they were not godly children.
 - So what would be the use of even trying?
 - Why should they fill the earth again if it was only going to be that it would be wicked and have to be destroyed again?
 - Here they were, having to start over...
- And in our day, we can look back on even more...
 - We can look back at the pre-flood days, but we can also see the ungodliness in both the entire Old Testament period...
 - (they stoned all their prophets and then they crucified Jesus)
 - And then we can see more ungodliness in the New Testament church... where major heresies began to spring up even while the apostles were still alive...
 - And then we see how Arianism nearly dominated the church...
 - And then how idolatry in worship arose with the papacy so that godliness almost seemed to be buried...
 - And today, there is so much apostasy—so much skepticism and unbelief in the church.

2. And then besides history, we see our own struggles and failures in trying to multiply and fill the earth with godly people...

- How often we are discouraged to see children that grew up in what appeared to be godly homes revolting—
 - turning from Jesus, giving themselves over to sin, falling into unbelief.
 - It is disturbing and jolting and it makes you feel like given up...

- Some of you suffer from barrenness...you want to have children, but you cannot...and that can discourage you and make want to give up instead of finding out other ways to serve God...
- Some of you struggle with training up your children in godliness—your correction of them seems to do no good...
 - they are whiny and disrespectful, they show little interest in learning God’s Word...and chastening seems to accomplish nothing...
 - Why should you keep trying when you are getting nowhere?
 - Do you ever feel like that?
- And some of you have tried to reach out to others,
 - to evangelise the lost, but you see no converts—just a lot of wasted effort—you can’t even get anyone to come to church...
 - you have tried to help believers who are caught in sin—but they do not listen and end up turning from the Lord...and against you too...
 - you have tried to help people grow...but it never seems to go anywhere—maybe they have even become angry with you and accused you of meddling with their affairs...

TRANS> It is easy to say, “Why should I go on? What is the use? What can I do?”

II. There is only one reason not to give up—and it is right here at the very beginning of chapter 9...

- **God blesses us that we might be fruitful and able to fill the earth with a godly seed!**
 - You see what verse 1 says...
 - **Genesis 9:1: So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”**

A. Do you remember how I have told you before that when God says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” it is not just a command, but also a blessing!

1. It is similar to the statement, “Help yourself” when you are at someone’s house and a wonderful table of delicious food is set before you.
 - In saying that, your host is not just issuing orders...
 - They are empowering you to have what is theirs—to have the food that is set before you!
 - When God says “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,”
 - He is empowering us to fill the earth—it is not just a bare command, but it is an enablement—there is creative power in His words...
 - Remember that He even told animals and plants to be fruitful and multiply—
 - Plants and animals cannot understand the command, but God’s call causes them to actually be fruitful and multiply...

2. We can see very clearly in Genesis 9:1 that the command to be fruitful is also a blessing—because it tells us that this is a blessing!
 - It tells us that God blessed Noah and said, be fruitful and multiply...
 - There was enabling power in God's words to bring about the fruitfulness.
 - God is showing Noah not only that He wants him and his children to endeavour to be fruitful,
 - but also that He is going to enable them to be so.
3. And Christian, God pronounces this same blessing on you...
 - His call to us today is the same—we are to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth with godly people...
 - and although we could never do this in our own strength, we can do it if God enables us—if He blesses us!
 - Each week we receive the benediction at the end of our services, and this reminds us that God puts His blessing on us as His people...
 - On us and on our children—that we might be fruitful...
 - in our encouragement of other believers, in our own lives as believers, in our bringing forth children, in our evangelism.
 - God is the one who makes things happen through us who would otherwise be impotent—barren and unfruitful.

TRANS> And we have even more reason to see that God has blessed us for fruitfulness...to see His commitment to this!

4. Above all, He has sent Jesus to make us fruitful...
 - I showed you last week that there was no godly seed in the earth until He came—He was the first and only person who truly pleased God...
 - He is the totally dedicated one that Noah knew he and his children were not and leaned upon when he offered his burnt offerings to God.
 - And now Jesus has come and He is the head of the church, and He has gone to the cross to atone for our sins,
 - and He has lived the life of total dedication that we are all supposed to live as our official representative.
 - As soon as we trust in Him, we are accounted as righteous—as if we were Him...
 - The LORD is totally committed to having a godly seed in the earth—He has gone to the greatest lengths to make it happen...
 - so we can have confidence that He will help us and that by His grace, we can fill the earth with godly people who are in Jesus, walking by faith and living by the transforming power of His grace!
- B. So don't give up, Christian—go forth in the strength of the Lord, looking to Him in faith to bless you and being assured that He will help you—and that He is helping you!

1. Be like Paul in our New Testament reading—
 - There he was in prison, encouraging Timothy to keep on going—to be bold—to never give up—
 - even though the old apostle was in prison and even though many who had worked with him had forsaken him...
 - he would not stop because he had faith in God—he kept on going and encouraging others to do so...
 - He knew that the future was with God and he refused to believe otherwise!
 - Is that how you are?

2. Be like Jacob when he felt threatened—that perhaps his whole household would be destroyed...
 - Do you remember what he did?
 - He wrestled with the LORD and would not let go of Him—
 - He said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me...”
 - And the Lord did bless him!
 - Parents, you have a promise from God for godly children—but you need faith to believe the promise...
 - You need to get hold of God in prayer and hold Him to His promise!
 - You can't hold Him to give you a new car or perfect health...
 - but you can and you should hold on to Him and refuse to let Him go until He gives you godly children!
 - You can't do it, but He can...
 - The best thing you can do when you see them rebelling and going astray is to get on your knees and plead with God!
 - Of course you should do what He tells you to do in His word along with that—
 - Get counsel from others, use the rod in the way He appoints, use rebuke and admonishment from Scripture, point your children to God's promises...show them what Jesus did and show them the gospel and how Christ can save them and make them godly...bring them to the means of grace...to church and family worship...
 - Have faith in God and don't give up!

 - 3. There are so many examples I could use...
 - There is the example of Joshua and Caleb when Israel was afraid to go into the Promised Land—they thought they could not do what God had called them to do...
 - And of course they could not do it without God's blessing—but Joshua and Caleb were ready to go forward looking to God's promised blessing!
 - They were not able to convince the people to go, but it was right of them to try to persuade them...

- And the LORD actually used them greatly, even though they could not get the people to listen...
 - The LORD used them to lead the next generation to in...
 - And that brings me to an important point...
- C. Don't necessarily assume that God is not blessing you just because you cannot see the blessing just yet...
1. For Joshua and Caleb, it was forty years later that they got to enjoy the blessing of leading the people into the Promised Land.
 - Their faith that did not lead to entering in in the first generation was not in vain—the fruit was just postponed...
 - Be careful not to judge by sight—God has other ways of blessing that we do not always see right away.
 2. I often admire in particular the missionaries who do the ground work in a place—
 - the ones who go in to a new area with the gospel and labour for forty years and never see a convert...
 - Then a successor goes in and begins to see many converts...
 - It is so wrong to attribute that to the successor—as if it is because of his methods or his cleverness or even his godliness...
 - More often than not, it is probably because of first missionary who laboured in faith all those years.
 - No one writes books about him or remembers his name, but it is often his labours that are being rewarded with fruitfulness.
 3. I often think of someone like Elijah in this regard too...
 - I have spoken to you about Elijah's ministry—
 - He got very discouraged because he did things like calling down fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel, but then only to have no one repent!
 - He thought the people would turn back to God in droves, but they did not.
 - But the LORD used Elijah greatly to promote His kingdom in the overall scheme of things....
 - One of Elijah's main tasks for the LORD was to declare what God was going to do to punish His people before God did it...
 - He put God's signature on God's acts of judgement...
 - He told the people that God was going to send a drought and a famine, and then God did...
 - He told them of kings that would be put down or raised up and they were.
 - In this way, Elijah made it clear to the people that these droughts or changes in kings were God's doing...
 - And that helped to strengthen the faith of the godly in Elijah's generation as well as in future generations...
 - Elijah was discouraged because he saw so little fruit, but God was using him for His kingdom in larger ways!

- We might even think of Jesus in this way...
 - His kingdom looked like an utter failure when He was crucified and even His disciples forsook Him...
 - and even after He was raised and still so few came to Him...
 - But what a foundation all of this was for future blessing and fruitfulness!
 - Don't give up, assuming that God is not blessing your work for Him! He may be laying foundations for the future!
 - Believe His promise to bless you and keep on going!
 - If He says that He will bless you, He will!

TRANS> So you see that the Lord tells you that He will bless you in the work that He has called you to do for Him...

- in particular, being fruitful and multiplying, so that you will not give up!
 - Just as He encouraged Noah after the flood that He would bless him in filling the earth with a godly seed, so He encourages us today!
- But now I want you to see that the Lord does not stop with a general promise to make Noah and his family fruitful...

III. The LORD accompanies His general promise to make us fruitful with specific helps to fruitfulness...

- In our text, there are three such helps to fruitfulness that are given to us...
 - Let's look at them and at how they apply to us...

A. The first thing the LORD gives us to facilitate fruitfulness is dominion over the wild beasts...

1. Remember that Noah was getting off the ark with a bunch of wild beasts.
 - As they multiplied, they would spread out, but initially Noah was there with lions and wolves and dinosaurs and bears...
 - These animals behaved in an extraordinary way when the LORD caused them to come and get on the ark...
 - but Noah would assume that they would return to their normal behaviour as wild beasts now that they were out of the ark...
 - That could be pretty frightening as Noah and his sons went about collecting food and planting gardens and such...
 - How would you like to go to bed before your house was finished in a tent knowing that wolves and lions and T-Rexes were roaming around in your neighbourhood?

2. But look at what the LORD promises to Noah and his family...in verse 2

- **Genesis 9:2** “**And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.**”

- In other words, the Lord was not going to let the animals keep Noah's family from being fruitful and multiplying!
 - He would restrain the beasts that could otherwise tear them to pieces and prevent them from multiplying and filling the earth.
 - This goes together with the promise at the end of verse 8 of regular seasons so that Noah could plant crops...
3. This promise of dominion—a measure of dominion—over nature applies to us too...
 - God uses storms and animal attacks to humble us and to remind us of our sin against Him,
 - but He will not let such things destroy His church.
 - We can look back now on over four thousand years of faithfulness in which nature had not destroyed God's people...
 - You can be sure that when sickness or storms or animals destroy, God will put a limit on them...
 - They will be brought against us only as a help to us—to prune the church to be more fruitful...but never to wipe us out.
- B. Secondly, there is the provision of food for us.
1. After the flood, Noah and his sons needed instruction from the LORD...
 - What were they permitted to eat now?
 - Would it be the same as it was before the flood, or would there be changes?
 - What would the LORD allow them to have?
 2. Well you can see that the Lord gives them both the herbs as before and also animals to eat—*every living thing that moves!*
 - That may have been a new provision, but as God had given them animals for sacrifices and for clothing before the flood (Adam and Eve were clothed with animal skins)
 - it may be that animals were eaten before the flood as well...
 - But in any case, God is giving Noah food for him to eat now.
 3. There is no disputing that God here authorised the eating of meat and the eating of herbs...
 - a. But see here the authority of God—these are things He gives us!
 - We would have no right to these things if He did not give them to us!
 - We need to realise that these are His gifts and that we have them by permission.
 - We need to eat with faith—that God has given them to us—and with thanksgiving—that God has given them to us.
 - And parents, let me encourage you—that if we see that we are not authorised to eat anything without permission from God,
 - It is important to teach your children not to grab things without permission...

- A lot of parents think it is cute when their child freely rummages through things without asking, but they should have a respect for you and for others that restrains them...
 - You need to teach them to ask before they carry things off that are not theirs—they can learn this as soon as they are big enough to get into things!
 - It is important for them to learn restraint when they are young or you can be sure that they will have trouble when they are older.
 - But see here that God has given us permission to eat both meat and plants...
- b. And you must not let anyone tell you that it is wrong to eat these things—at least not for theological reasons...
- People may have other reasons to abstain from meat, but they must not make it a moral law for religious reasons...
 - Don't submit to men's ordinances at lent or the popes' decree not to eat meat on Fridays...
 - No man has the authority to take from us what God has given to us to eat—to prohibit what God had graciously given us.
- c. But at the same time, when we see that food is given to us by permission from God,
- We need to be sure that we do not abuse His gifts—with gluttony and drunkenness—with shameful excess...
 - You see that in verse 4, there is a prohibition against eating animals that are still alive—
 - that is, the gross idolatrous practice of eating them while they are still alive—this cruelty and barbarism is not acceptable to God.
 - We are not to abuse what God gives us, but we are to enjoy what He has given us to His glory—and for our sustenance that we might be fruitful and multiply!
 - Where would we be without food!

TRANS> And then there is the third thing that God does to help us be fruitful and multiply...

C. He institutes capital punishment for murderers...

1. This is expressed in verses 5-6...

- **Gen 9:5-6: Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a *reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."**
- You see here that there was to be the execution of either a man or a beast who murdered a human being.
 - God was authorising civil government to carry out vengeance in His name against murderers...

2. This was important because after all the death in the flood, Noah and his sons might suppose that life was cheap...
 - We certainly have that in our society—more and more—
 - We have everything from abortion to suicide to euthanasia.
 - And there are many who destroy their bodies with drugs or immorality.
 - God is making it clear that life is not cheap!
 - Life is sacred because man is made in God’s image...those who murder are attacking God Himself...
 - The flood was not sent because life was cheap, but for the very opposite reason—because it is so precious...and so important!
 - Men who were made in the image of God had degraded His image, and that is why God destroyed them!
 - That is why the wages of sin is death!
 - God will not allow men to deface His image and remain unpunished...
 - But it is God alone who has authority to take life—not us!
 - We can only take life if God authorises it—
 - and he does authorise it for the civil magistrate or, if necessary, for self defense.
 - But we are never warranted to take matters into our own hands as if we were God—as if we were the ones to decide who should live and who should die.
3. And you see that God authorises punishment if we do murder...that we ourselves be executed...
 - God instituted this to restrain violence and murder—
 - Before the flood, there was no such provision, and the result was that the world became more and more violent...
 - Societies who do not execute murderers end up with a lot death.
 - We need to value life enough to take vengeance on those who murder.
 - God puts this restraint on us to facilitate fruitfulness...

TRANS> And that brings us back to the main point...which is reiterated for emphasis in verse 7...

Conclusion: The LORD blesses us and calls us to fill the earth with godly people...

- Verse 7 says: **And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.**
 - That is what God wants—
 - And we can do this only if He blesses us—and He will bless us!
 - He is so committed to fruitfulness—to an earth filled with godly seed, that He has gone so far as to send His Son Jesus—
 - to come in human flesh and be the first-fruits of the new heaven and the new earth where righteousness dwells...
 - The only way we can be godly is through faith in Him.