

## Meaty Glory: Displaying Christ's Glory and Delighting in His Grace in the Creation Mandate

# Genesis 9:1-7

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Main Idea: The renewed creation mandate is to fill God's creation, by God's power, with the display of God's glory in Jesus Christ by means of those whom Christ conforms to His own image.

### Introduction

In Genesis 1:27-30, we read "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food'; and it was so.

It is obvious that we have an echo of that here in our passage this morning. And, in this echo we hear the surprising sound of great grace, for it was not with God's image that man had filled the earth! 6:5, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth"; and 6:11, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence"; and 6:12, "So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth"; and 6:13, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

Yet now, in God's redemption plan, we see that He renews His creation mandate. Again, He says, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Our passage begins and ends with this command, but in between these bookends, He includes some things that at first glance look out of place. A new menu for humanity's suppers. A mandatory minimum sentence for murderers. How do these things fit, since v1 and 7 make clear that we are on this subject the whole time?

What we see in this passage before us is the what, the how, and the why of God's renewing the creation mandate in God's redemption plan. What is commanded in this creation mandate? How will man be able to fulfill this mandate? And why is this mandate given such a central place in God's redemption plan? In summary, what we will find is that by the redemption that is in Christ, the creation mandate is to fill God's creation, by God's power, with the display of Jesus Christ as God's glory in those whom Christ redeems.

### The "What" of renewing the creation mandate in God's redemption plan

The original creation mandate was to fill the earth with the image of God, and take dominion over all of the creatures. But when man had fallen, he filled the earth instead with wickedness and violence (6:5, 11-13).

Now we have the problem that—even with just Noah and his family there—the mindset of man is evil from his youth (8:21). But God has a solution for that—the solution in which He declared His divine pleasure over that soothing aroma. His delight in Christ overcomes His wrath against Adam, and so He has declared war on the curse, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake"!

How complete, how successful is Christ's redemption of man? The Lord wants an entire world full of people who are renewed in the image of God by Jesus who is Himself God—the brightness of His glory and the exact imprint of His image (Heb 1:3)!

Now, with a view to the Last Adam, the Lord emphasizes the distinction between man and all the other creatures.

- Not only is he to take dominion over them, but God graciously supplies him with a big part of the means of doing so: God is going to put the fear and dread of man upon every other earthly creature.
- No longer is man go to cafeteria with all the other animals, equally supplied alongside them with every herb of the field and fruit tree. The Lord supplies him now with every moving thing as his food. The Lord intensifies the display of the distinction between all the other creatures and man, who alone is made in the image of God. And this helps us to see some of the "how" of renewing the creation mandate in God's redemption plan.

## The “How” of renewing the creation mandate in God’s redemption plan

There is something here about **nutrition**. Vegetables were sufficient man before Genesis nine. We know that, because that was all that God gave man to eat at that point. But, unless in God’s providence someone has a physiological counterindication for eating meat, it would be foolish now to be a strict vegetarian. If God has given eating meat His commendation, we should expect that it is conducive to good health. In fact, in the later case of Daniel and his friends, their health on a vegetable-only diet is presented in Scripture as a miraculous intervention of God to bless their refusal to eat that which had been sacrificed to Bel and Nebo.

We must resist the temptation to call evil anything that God has provided as good. There is wisdom to be applied and stewardship to be exercised, and “let him who eats eat unto the Lord.” But, by this pen stroke of the Holy Spirit against vegetarianism, we are reminded that there is even the spiritual danger of handling our theories about food in such a way that they take on an almost religious significance. The kingdom of Christ “is not in eating and drinking but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Clearly, here, the emphasis is upon the widening provision of God, who prizes man above all other creatures, and who supplies man with every good thing, so that we may be amply supplied for love and service and enjoyment of God in His creation.

There is also something here about **sufficient providence**. Mathematically speaking, this does not seem like the best time to encourage going full omnivore. There are comparatively few animals to feast upon. But the Lord implies that His providence is more than sufficient to sustain them, even if man literally takes a bite out of their population. More than that, as man himself is now given the daunting command to fill the earth, he is reminded that the Lord whose providence is sufficient to sustain the fruitfulness and multiplying of the animals is the one who will uphold and enable the fruitfulness and multiplying of man.

And man is going to need it! Because his multiplication must be more than mathematics and biology. Obedience to this command is not accomplished merely by having many babies who have many babies. Which brings us to the “why” of God’s renewing the creation mandate in His redemption plan.

## The “Why” of renewing the creation mandate in God’s redemption plan

We already have several hints about why man is so special, but this passage gives us one such hint about man’s specialness that we might easily miss at first. The prohibition against eating meat with the blood in it.

It is interesting that, after God had declared some animal foods unclean for the church under Moses the servant, that when God set Christ over the church as a Son, and He declared all foods clean, the Spirit-led apostolic church still prohibited the eating of meat with the blood in it. Why?

Well, the way our passage answers that question is because, the blood is “its life.” In other words, although we are to recognize that God provides *for our life* through other created things, it is He Himself alone who *is our life*. Man’s life is not something that can come from an animal, nor should he seek his life there.

No, as vv5-6 make plain, man’s blood is different from animal blood, because man’s life comes directly from God. We saw that in 2:7, when it wasn’t the blood in his veins but God’s breath in his nose that made man a living being. We see it in John 1:1-5, where the Holy Spirit tells us that it is Jesus’s own life that is the light of men.

So, the first reason for renewing the creation mandate has to do with man’s **creation**. Man is made in God’s image. An attack upon man’s life is an attack upon God. In fact, this is one way that a man forfeits his life--by murdering someone else, he turns himself not into the picture of Jesus that is here commanded to fill the earth, but that picture of the devil that had filled the earth before the flood. The murder defaces God’s image twice--in himself and in his victim--and God demands that every human society justly put the murderer to death.

A second reason for renewing the creation mandate has to do with man’s **redemption**. Not only was man originally created in God’s image, but God Himself is going to take on man’s flesh as Jesus Christ, so that He can shed His blood--give His life--to atone for man’s sin.

It is impossible to read the language about the life being in the blood and not connect it to God’s declaration that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin” (Hebrews 9:22). In John 6, Jesus declares that He gives

Himself for the life of the world, that the bread that He gives is His flesh, that eating His flesh and drinking His blood is to come to Him and to see Him and to believe in Him and to feed upon Him and to have life because of Him. In fact, He says that if we do not come to Him and see Him and believe in Him and feed upon Him and have life because of Him, that we have no life in us at all.

Before the fall, man was a display of the image of God. Now, sinful man is a display of the fact that there is only life in Jesus, only through the blood of Jesus.

So, the reason in v4-6 for not eating animals with the blood is not taken away but rather strengthened by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our life is not something that can be supplied by an animal. We are to come eat the bread of life and drink the cup of the new covenant because they show forth the Lord's death, they announce to us, "the only life a sinful man can ever have is by the death of Jesus Christ!"

A third reason for renewing the creation mandate has to do with man's **relationship** to God. There is a picture, or perhaps just a whisper, of the glorious truth of adoption here.

To be sure, man has eaten meat before. God had not granted it to him, but we didn't get to the flood by way of men obeying God's rules. Here, for the first time God grants to man what he has only lawfully seen to this point by way of sacrifice. Up until this point, roasting meat was something man could lawfully see and smell but only as something that was being offered unto God.

It is like a young servant boy who works in the great king's palace as a dishwasher. He will get a filling bowl of gruel when he's done with his shift, but oh how he wonders at what it would taste like even to eat the leftovers that he is scraping off of the dishes. He mustn't, however. It's not for him. It's forbidden.

There he is, working cheerfully away. The king is a good king, and the gruel is good gruel, and the job is a good job. Suddenly, he feels a tap on his shoulder and turns to find, to his astonishment, that it's the king himself. The king tells him that his shift is over, and it's time to eat, and takes him by the hand.

The boy wonders what is happening, when they go past the servants' dining room and up to the great hall. There, in the great hall, are many other princes and noblemen, rich and important people with fancy name cards at their places. But they pass table after table, and there are no open places. The food on each plate looks amazing, but none so amazing as at the king's table, to which he brings the now worried boy. Worried, because the only empty seat is the great king's chair.

But the worry changes into wonder, when the great king sits down in his great chair, puts his own royal fork into the boy's hand and says, "tonight you will eat from my plate."

This is something like what it would have been for Noah in our passage this morning. That which had only ever lawfully been a sacrifice unto the living God--now the living God Himself was telling Noah and his sons that they could eat! The Creator and Judge of all the world was saying, "here now; you may eat from My plate"!

In fact, when we come to this passage in light of Scripture as a whole, we see God not just saying to us "you may eat from My plate," but announcing to the creation, "these are My children!" Isn't that what we see in Romans 8:14 and 15 and 16 and 17 and 18 and 19 and 21 and especially Romans 8:29?! He who loves to say "this is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" loves most of all to say it by saying, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I have created and redeemed and now adopted aaaallllllllll of these as My beloved children!"

God loves His Son. And God loves to present His Son as the great display of His own glory. And from before the world began, God's plan for the display of His Son was that He would end up the Firstborn among many brethren whom He had made, for whom He had shed His blood, to whom He had given His Spirit, until at last by His Spirit, all of these adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ have been conformed to His image and shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father (cf. Mt 13:43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" ... and ... Dan 12:2-3 "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" ... and ... this description of our risen Lord that uses words basically to say that there are no words, Rev 1:14-16 "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if

refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength”).

This is what all creation is groaning toward, this is that glory to be revealed in believers, to which no suffering of the present time can compare: the revealing of the sons of God, the redemption of their bodies, their glorification--the display of Jesus Himself as the firstborn among many brethren.

### **Application**

So the creation mandate is really the great commission: not just have a lot of babies and dominate the animals, but rather make disciples of Jesus from all the nations; fill the world of those whose future is to shine like the sun. Teach them to obey all that Jesus has commanded, because His plan for them is that they would be perfectly like Him.

So, is this your goal for yourself? Do you seek to be salt and light--a display of what the Lord Jesus does when He lays hold of a sinner? Do you seek to live in this creation as someone who truly belongs to the new creation?

And is this your goal for your children? Constantly showing them Christ. Constantly calling them away from their sin. Constantly calling them to faith in Christ and to love and thankfulness and service of Him in all that they do.

And is this your goal for your neighbor? Not only that he would be warm and well fed--but that he see how great a sinner he is and especially that he see how great a Savior of sinners Jesus is! And, just as with your neighbor's being warm and well fed, what are you doing--even as salt and light--to set before that neighbor Christ in all His beauty?

Or perhaps you are here this morning, maybe even as a member of the church, and you are that neighbor that we are talking about. You've never really thought of yourself as a display of Jesus Christ--just a regular human being. Working hard. Doing right. Keeping your nose clean.

But, my friend, you are a display of something! We were created in the image of God. There can be no such thing as "just a human being." There are only two choices. Either your life is "a display of the life and glory of Jesus Christ" Who redeems even such sinners as we are and begins the marvelous work of pressing us into His image and preparing us for unimaginable glory... Or else, if that is not what your life is about, then it is my solemn duty and profound grief to inform you that your life is instead "a display of the death and shame of Adam."

I tell you, we have all had our beginning in exactly that place. There is nothing good that any of us have done to be right with God. And the whole point of this plan to display the glory of Jesus is that not one of us can claim credit for a single particle of the change He has made. Though our lives are now about displaying Him, it is a grief to us that we are such poor displays thus far.

I do not urge you to become like we are. No! I set Jesus Christ Himself before you in His Word. I tell you that it is His glory to be the perfection that is counted for you as if it were your own. I tell you that it will then be His glory to make your life all about Him and for Him to keep working on you until at last you yourself shine like the sun as He does!

God will display His glory in Christ--do not slump toward eternity in which His glory will be vindicated by damning you. Come to Him now. He is more ready to forgive you than you are ready to be forgiven. It is God's pleasure to display Christ's glory by filling the earth with those who began exactly as you are now. Trust in this glorified Christ, and let His glory be displayed in redeeming you!

### **Conclusion**

Here we have had the what, the how, and the why, of God's renewing the creation mandate in His redemption plan. Filling God's creation, by God's power, with the display of God's glory in Jesus Christ and those whom Jesus Christ redeems!

Oh, dear congregation, the Lord bids us eat from His table because He is about the business of displaying Himself in His Son, and He loves to do so by displaying His Son as the firstborn among many brethren. This display of Christ's glory is that with which we are called to fill the earth. This display of Christ's glory is what we are to enjoy in every curse-reversing blessing. This display of Christ's glory is what we are to treasure as the image of God in man!