“The Rainbow”

Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17

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Introduction:

Previously, I wrote a quick out-the-door article titled: “Promise in a Pop of Color.” It states:

“I woke up this morning feeling, well . . . . blah!!! Headache, no energy, not feeling really with it. This week has been something else and I guess it’s taking a toll on my body.

As I was looking for something to wear, I reached into my closet and pulled out a white shirt (black and white shirts are a standby for me because they usually don’t have to be ironed – telling on myself, I know). But, even though it didn’t need to be ironed, I put it back declaring, in my dreariness, that I need a pop of color.
As I was going through the drudgery of ironing my pop of color I wondered if that’s why God made His covenant to Noah and all the earth in the form of a rainbow. After the rains and the storms of life, after the hardships and turmoil, after being tossed about to and fro, maybe we all need that “PROMISE IN A POP OF COLOR!” (Word For Life Says)

We all need that beautiful colorful, covenant to gaze upon to let us know that everything is going to be alright.

God’s promises, which are His covenants, do that for man. They let us know that God is still sovereign in spite of it all. God is still ruling from His throne though one may feel spent at the storms that are raging. God’s covenant lets us know that God still cares about us and He is still looking out for us, even when our own sinful nature gets in the way of His perfect plan.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, it led to not only them sinning, but sin entering in the world and infecting the entire human race forever. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” (Rom. 5:12). The consequences of the choices of Adam and Eve were then passed on to the rest of humanity.

Thus sin, the ravenous beast that it is, didn’t stop there. As a matter of fact, it only grew worse. Genesis 6:11 says, “The
earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” In other words, the effects of sin had permeated everything and the whole world was under its influence and infected by its power. The perfect paradise that God created, in the beginning, had now become a habitation of evil, “for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth,” (Gen. 6:12).

With that the Bible tells us plainly, “It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart,” (Gen. 6:6). The heart of God was broken over what His creation had become. They were far from the way He designed and purposed them to be. The effects of sin were traumatic. The effects of sin caused God to say, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air,” (Gen. 6:7). All of creation would pay for man’s sin.

By the time we reach the point of today’s lesson in history, we see the deed has already been done. It had already rained for forty days and forty nights killing all life on the earth (Gen. 7:12). The animals, along with Noah and his family that was saved, had already resided in the safety of the ark for about a year (compare Genesis 7:11; 8:13-14). Stepping out onto the new ground and seeing their world changed before them had to be a horrific and terrifying; yet wonderful and awe-inspiring
sight. They and all mankind after them needed reassurance from God about their future and their hope. They needed to know that despite all of this, despite everything that has taken place, God is still in control and He still has a plan in effect on behalf of mankind (Genesis 7:13-8:19).

Genesis 8:20-22 “And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

“And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD . . . and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” This is no surprise for a man who walked closely with God in obedience to live right before God and to build the ark when the circumstances probably seemed ludicrous to everyone else around him (although, when the rains started I bet they wished they had listened). Noah was devoted to God before the flood (Genesis 6:8-9) and had a worshipful heart still after the flood. God had brought him and his family through the most horrific event ever known to man (up until that point anyway, for the final judgment is a whole
other story). So terrible was it, they were the only ones alive as testimony to it.

Without having a background reference at this point in history to the Levitical laws of clean and unclean animals and the like, Noah still knew what would be an acceptable or not an acceptable offering to the Lord. With that, Noah only sacrificed to God the good, “clean beast, and of every clean fowl.” This goes beyond just giving God something of the ordinary, but it’s taking the best of the best, out of a humble, grateful heart, and using it to worship God; to show Him the reverence and adoration He deserves.

“And the LORD smelled a sweet savour” which means in our understanding that God accepted the offering. It was something He was pleased with. Noah’s original walk of faith with God led him to continue to seek to please God. It is our walk of faith that is pleasing to Him today (Hebrews 11:6). We don’t have to offer sacrifices like Noah did (for Christ already paid the price, see Galatians 3:13-15); rather, we offer lives that live in submission to Him and His will (see Romans 12:1) through our Lord Jesus Christ who became the ultimate “sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour,” (Ephesians 5:2).

“The LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” An event like this will never happen again (discussed later in this lesson in greater detail in Genesis
9:11). Before God openly spoke to Noah and his sons, He had already purposed “in his heart” how the course of events would or would not play out during the rest of the days that the earth remains. God always has a set plan and a set purpose to everything that occurs under the sun and His ways are always right (Hosea 14:9).

“For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Mankind has the propensity to sin and to follow the many wrong paths his evil heart seeks to lead him (compare Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:19-21); and he takes pleasure in it. When sin entered the world through Adam everyone became contaminated with its effects (Romans 5:12; as noted in the introduction). From birth, no one was perfect, save Jesus Christ alone (compare Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19, 2:22). We were all ungodly (Romans 5:6).

Despite all of that, God continues, “Neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.” He is reiterating and supporting what He spoke in His heart in relation to the ground not again being cursed in such a manner as this as an answer to the degradation of mankind’s sinful nature. Man’s true answer to sin will only be found in the individual choices one makes or not makes in accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is only through that perfect sacrifice He gave for
sinners where mankind can find hope for redemption; the healing and saving of the failings of his evil heart and sinful nature. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” (1 Corinthians 15:22; see also 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Therefore, continuing to relate to the promise noted above, God also declares that “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” When this promise is finally revealed to them, I imagine it bringing much peace to these weary, former ark dwellers. Noah, his sons, descendants, and any and all that come after him (us) don’t have to worry about another flooding global eradicating occurrence again. They will receive the promise that the seasons will come and go as they always have, transitioning as they go through their set course in nature. There will still be days of winter and days of summer; days of rain, snow, sun, and birds chirping. The sun will still set and rise at its appointed time each day and night. The times for planting and reaping will still come during their yearly cycles. There will not be an interruption, on a global scale, of these times of the days and years. The promise is that as long as the “earth remaineth” so will these.

Genesis 9:8-10 “And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature
that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.”

Then God speaks “unto Noah, and to his sons with him” to begin to reveal and unfold His promises to them. It was not only important for Noah to grasp what God was about to reveal, but his sons would be responsible in the future for passing this pertinent information on to those who come after them, their children, grandchildren and such. They would need to know from firsthand experience the promise that God spoke to and for His people. Ministry for God is often a collaborative event that includes close family working relationships. What God had purposed in His heart He is now revealing His plan and purpose to “Noah, and to his sons with him.”

“Saying, I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.” The “I” stated twice is God’s reaffirming that He is the author of this “covenant.” A “covenant” is a binding contract. It is an agreement between two parties to promise to follow through with the stipulations in the said contract. Here, in today’s lesson, God is entering into a binding agreement with all of humanity. Though humanity is the one who sinned and left the terms of the first contract, (eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil), God is still seeking the welfare of His creation by setting in terms before them another
promise of care and protection. Not only does this apply to Noah and his sons, but to “your seed after you,” which encompasses every man, woman, and child in every generation to come.

“And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.” Humans were not the only ones who had a price to pay for the sin that entered the world. “Every living creature” paid the price for man’s downfall. Sin taints whatever it touches. Galatians 5:9 tells us, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Like a cancerous cell that divides and spreads to other areas of the body, sin preys on all that is around it, man and beast. Everything had become corrupt in the eyes of God. Everything was far from the “good” that was declared over them in the beginning, Gen. 1:31. Everything needed to be washed and cleansed on the face of the earth. God made not only a promise with man, but also with “every living creature,” because ultimately, they all paid the price for the sin in the earth, and all would be covered under this new “covenant.”

Genesis 9:11 “And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”
Here is God’s deal with “the earth” and all that is in it or will ever be in it. Though floods may rise here and there in isolated areas due to different events or weather occurrences, there will never be a time that God will allow “all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”

This was a one-time event never to be repeated again. Can we even begin to grasp how much Noah needed that promise from God at that moment? Let’s imagine for just a minute what the earth possibly looked like after the flood. We know that vegetation had begun to regrow because the “dove brought back freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth,” when they were still on the ark (Gen. 8:11). But, was there evidence of the tragedy that took place? As gruesome as it may seem, after departing from the ark did they witness fragments of man that once was lying around? They were the only ones alive on the whole entire earth, were they afraid? They needed to know that something like this would never happen again.

For our time, we need to know that not only will something like this never happen again, but we need to be reassured that God keeps exactly what He promised us through thick and thin.

**Genesis 9:12-13** “And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set
my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.”

A “token” is much like a symbol. It is used as a visual reminder to identify with something else. We often hear people say in giving a gift of some sort to a person for doing something for them, “Please, accept this as a token of my appreciation.” They want to give a gift as a symbol of how grateful they are to that individual.

In sealing His promise with Noah and “every living creature that is with you . . . and the earth” God placed such a symbol in the sky for all to see; for all to remember no matter how hard or terrible life may seem at times, He’s still looking out for His own. The rainbow, as we call it today, appears after times of rain and storms to assure mankind that God’s covenant still stands true. He will never fail to keep what He has promised.

Genesis 9:14-15 “And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.”

“The bow shall be seen” attest to the visual reminder of what God will and will not do. God will “remember” His covenant. God will not “destroy all flesh” by “flood” again. God is so gracious to often intervene through our lives to give us visual
inspirations to hold on to though we are called to live by faith (Hab. 2:4). Many times I often stand in awe when I see a rainbow in the sky and utter to myself, “God’s promise.” What we see, connected with the promise He has attached to it, comforts many hearts through the most difficult of times.

Genesis 9:16-17 “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

When something is “established” it means that it is firmly fixed in place, not to be moved or annulled. Here, God “established” this “covenant;” this binding contract between Himself “and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth,” which is not to be voided under any circumstances. Often, when God makes promises there are stipulations or conditions that must be followed through in order to receive the promise. For instance, God said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” In that promise, God will hear from heaven and heal their land,
but only after the people humble themselves before Him, pray and seek His face and turn from their evil ways.

In this promise to Noah, this covenant is “established;” it will remain in effect, as spoken by God, as long as the earth remains. Never again will all flesh be destroyed because of a flood. God never said that judgment would never happen again, He stated, it wouldn’t be done by means of a global flood. The next time fire will be the issuing force of God’s judgment (see 2 Peter 3:6-12) and those who live righteously will be looking forward to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

**Conclusion**

God has established a covenant with Noah that perpetuates down through all lines of the human race. As a token of what He said He will do and not do, God placed a rainbow in the sky for us to have a visual reminder of His love, grace, and longsuffering with humanity.

This lesson is also reassuring in our day to day lives. It encourages us that whatever God has promised us, that He will do. He never fails and He never reneges on His promises. We can trust our God, always, no matter the storms.