

A Fresh Start
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Genesis 8 and 9

Opening: **Did you ever have an Etch-A-Sketch when you were a kid? Was it fun or frustrating? What was the BEST part about an Etch-A-Sketch?**

We've become very good at fixing our mistakes and starting over with the written word. For our ancestors it was a clean slate; for our parents, a good eraser; then came "white-out," and now we have the delete key and spell check. We can fix our typos but we often struggle with how to find a FRESH START when it comes to the guilt of our mistakes.

God invented the FRESH START! He doesn't just patch us up or clean us up. If we accept His free gift of salvation through Christ, He makes us a new creation.

Let's look at our text as we ask: "What does it say?"; "What does it mean?"; and "How should it change us this week?" Let's start with verse one of chapter eight:

Genesis 8:1 (ESV)

8 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

- "God remembered Noah..." God never forgets anything. **What do you think it means when that verse says "God remembered Noah?"**
- The word remembered means to bring to mind. In the midst of His judgment, God never forgot about Noah and those with Noah in the ark. For God to remember Noah in this context meant He was ready to act to change Noah's situation.¹
- Sometimes we feel God has forgotten us. We know better, but we feel that way.
- God never forgets us. God's timing is perfect and at the right time He acts to fix our problem. While we're waiting we have to trust that He will!

Genesis 8:15–22 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

- It's amazing how scripture can pack big things into little verses! Verse fifteen would be easy to skip over: "Then God said to Noah (comma)." Let's don't!
- Wouldn't you like to know you had a word directly from God? **What was it about Noah that might cause God to give him specific direction?**
- We sometimes feel that God doesn't seem to speak to our situation. Maybe God speaks to those He knows will LISTEN and OBEY what He says to do.
- Noah DID obey as he led his family off the Ark. Notice verse nineteen: the animals and birds "went out by families." In the same super-natural way God had marched them to the Ark, they marched right off.
- **How long did we say Noah and his family were locked in the Ark with the animals? What would your emotions have been like while waiting for God? When God said to disembark, what do you think their emotions were like?**

- “The good news: we’re getting’ out of this dark, stinking Ark!” **What was the bad news? Why do prisoners often commit a crime shortly after getting out?**
- Our lesson writer says, *“Imagine the questions and thoughts that might have raced through their minds as they stepped down on dry ground for the first time in over a year. Did they know where they were? Did they know how to start over? Surely some practical thoughts of survival came to mind. They would have to find (or build) dwellings for shelter. They would need an ongoing food supply. Perhaps their minds were fixed on all the necessary tasks of rebuilding their lives. Yet they had a much larger matter to consider too. The vastness of God’s commission to replenish the earth was daunting. They had been directed to replenish the planet with human families. As daunting as these thoughts must have seemed, hearing God’s voice assured Noah that God would be with them and again would bless His creation.”*²
- Truth: A fresh start can be scary, but God can be trusted to meet our needs.
- Their heads must have been spinning as they came off the Ark! “Where are we? Where will we go? What will we do for food and shelter?” Noah was focused on something else. Verse twenty:

God’s Covenant with Noah

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

- It’s impressive that the first thing Noah did was have a worship service. As the only two turkeys on earth ran away to multiply, Noah celebrated thanksgiving!
- **What is the lesson for you and me from verse twenty?**

Warren Wiersbe uses five “W” words to describe Noah. He writes:

*Noah was a balanced believer. He walked with the Lord in loving communion and enjoyed His presence. He worked for the Lord in building the ark, and he witnessed for the Lord as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). While in the ark, he waited on the Lord for instructions concerning his leaving, and once he was standing on the earth, he worshipped the Lord.*³

- When God brings us through a storm, is our first reaction to thank Him and praise Him for who He is? Instead we often forget too quickly what He’s done for us.
- Verse twenty-one says God could smell the smoke and it was good.
- **God doesn’t have nostrils like you and me. What does this mean?**
- The description of God “smell [-ing] the pleasant aroma” is a human way of stating a divine truth: God was satisfied with the sacrifice, accepted it, and was pleased with His people and their worship (Lev. 1:9; 3:16).
- [The] New Testament [uses this language in speaking] of Jesus Christ offering Himself up for us.

Ephesians 5:2 (ESV)

² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- Because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. You and I, by accepting His gift of salvation, can be a pleasing aroma to God. As 2 Corinthians 2:15 says, “Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. (NLT)”
- We CAN BE a sweet smelling aroma to God if we’re “in Christ.”
- Verse twenty-one goes on to give us the really great news.

²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

- God promises two things: He won't "curse the ground" again because of man's sin. God cursed the ground because of Adam and Cain, but He wouldn't add any more hardship and affliction. ⁴
- He also promises He won't kill every living creature in a massive way.
- One day He'll destroy the earth with fire. But His children will be spared.
- Here's a key statement: "...for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."
- The flood had washed away the sinners, but not the sin. Noah and his family were spared for a FRESH START, but they still had the sin of Adam in them.
- Instead of wiping out all of humanity as He did in the flood, God gave us GRACE.
- He also used the cycles of His own creation to remind us of His promise: ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."
- A commentator writes, "We're prone to take for granted sunrise and sunset, the changing face of the moon and the changing sea- sons, but all of these functions are but evidences that God is on the throne and keeping His promises." ⁵
- God gave Noah and his family their next marching orders, then repeated his promise:

Genesis 9:1 (ESV)

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Genesis 9:11–16 (ESV)

¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

- In a *Peanuts* cartoon strip Lucy and Linus are staring out the window, watching it rain. The conversation goes like this: Lucy: "Boy! Look at it pour. ¹ What if it floods the whole world?" Linus: "It won't. In [Genesis 9](#), God promised Noah that would never happen again. The sign of that promise is the rainbow." Lucy, turning back to the window with a big smile: "You've taken a great load off my mind." Linus: "Sound theology has a way of doing that."⁶
- When we see a rainbow, it reminds us that God made a covenant with mankind that He will never again destroy the earth by flood.
- We've talked about the meaning of covenants before. It's a promise made between two parties. We often think of the marriage covenant.
- In this case, it's a "one way" promise initiated by God to man, because sinful people have no way to "make a deal" with God. Because of our sinful nature we are morally bankrupt and powerless to do anything about it.
- God made a series of "divine covenants" through the history of scripture. Each one built upon the other until Jesus' death and resurrection gave us the new

covenant. Jesus said to his disciples: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20)

- A new covenant from God to us that our sins can be forgiven forever, sealed in the blood of Jesus: That's the ULTIMATE FRESH START!

So, What's the Takeaway?

In December of 1914, Thomas Edison's laboratory and factory burned to the ground. Everything was destroyed. The damage exceeded two million dollars, the buildings were only insured for \$238,000 because they were made of concrete and thought to be fireproof. Edison was 67 years old and his finances had already been strained before the fire. The next morning, Edison looked at the ruins and said, "There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew."⁷

- God makes it possible for every person to have a FRESH START.

John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- You might say, *"I've claimed that promise. I've accepted that verse. I've received God's grace for my eternal salvation. I know Heaven is mine, but I still have days when I feel as messed up as those people who drowned in the great flood."*
- That's when we can claim God's ongoing promise of a FRESH START:

1 John 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

To paraphrase Edison: "All our mistakes are covered by the blood of Jesus. Thank God we can start anew!"

¹ Explore the Bible SESSION 5: A Fresh Start p.51 Lifeway

² Explore the Bible SESSION 5: A Fresh Start p.53 Lifeway

³ Wiersbe Old Testament Bible Commentary. P. 43

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ Charles Swindoll, *Eternal Security: The Assurance of Our Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁷ Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*, Thomas Nelson, 1978, pp. 82-3, and *Bits and Pieces*, November, 1989, p. 12