

Before the Door Closes, Part 2: Genesis 7:11-16

Main Idea: God is both our righteous judge and our only true refuge.

I. Faithful Refuge | Genesis 7:11-16

Last week, Genesis 7:1–10 brought Noah and his family right up to the flood. Noah entered the ark, the animals came as God had said, and the flood came. Genesis 7:11 gives us an unusually precise description of when the flood began: “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month.” This kind of detail places the flood in real human history and prevents us from considering it as mythological. The judgement God had been warning about was now present for Noah and his generation. Just because life had been continuing on as normal didn’t mean God had changed his mind. His judgement came exactly as he promised and when He intended. One of the easiest assumptions for us to make in life is that tomorrow is guaranteed because we saw the sun rise today. Scripture encourages wisdom and planning. **However, expecting and presuming you deserve tomorrow might reveal a lack of dependence on the Lord.** James confronts people who confidently say what they will do “today or tomorrow” without considering the fact that their lives belong to God (James 4:13–15). Genesis 7 reminds us that history continues because God wills it to.

Verses 11–12 describe something far more destructive than a severe rainstorm. “All the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.” Earlier in Genesis, God had separated the waters and established boundaries so that dry land could appear and life could flourish (Gen. 1:6–10). Now those boundaries are being undone. The world God ordered in creation is experiencing something like a reversal of creation. What God had separated is coming back together, and the dry land on which humanity lived is disappearing beneath the waters. **This helps us understand that we can easily take for granted that the order of creation is itself a gift from God.** We expect creation to behave in mostly predictable ways. We speak about “the laws of nature” because the world normally behaves a certain way, but creation doesn’t operate independently from its Creator. God is the One who established its order and continues to uphold it. Psalm 29:10 says, “The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.” The flood occurred under the authority of the King who rules over creation. This doesn’t mean we look at every natural disaster as a punishment for a particular sin. Jesus warns against this kind of thinking in Luke 13:1–5. In Genesis 7, God Himself has explicitly stated why this judgment is happening. The flood comes because of the widespread violence and corruption before God. The order and stability of creation are gifts given and sustained by God, not guarantees that exist apart from him. **People might treat separation from God as freedom, but rebellion against Him is separation from life itself.**

Jesus uses the days of Noah in Matthew 24:37–39 to show how ordinary life can distract our focus from eternal things. He emphasizes that the people of Noah’s generation were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” right up until the flood came. We know they were characterized by violence and corruption, but in the midst of their evil intentions they were doing almost everything we normally do (Genesis 6:5). **The actions Jesus refers to aren’t sinful in and of themselves, but they were used as distractions to avoid God’s character, warnings, and promises.** This is why Jesus’ warning is imperative for us today. Just because someone isn’t openly hostile to God doesn’t mean they will escape his coming judgement. As Paul says, many have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie” and they ignore the reality of eternal things for the sake of worldly treasures (Romans 1:25). **Jesus points back to Noah because there is a serious danger in becoming so comfortable with life as it is that we stop living in light of the promise of Christ’s return.**

To Ponder:

1. Why is it important to understand that creation is sustained and ordered by God rather than just set in motion by Him? What implications does this have for believers in how they live?
2. If we truly live in light of the fact that Christ could return on any “ordinary” day, how should that specifically change the way you approach your job, your family, or any other routine this week?

Verses 13–16 bring our attention to the work God does inside the ark. On the outside, the ordered world is being overwhelmed by judgment. On the inside, Noah, his family, and the animals God has brought are being preserved. Both things are happening under the authority and hand of the same God. **We don't get to choose between a God who judges evil and a God who saves sinners. He is both the righteous Judge and the gracious Savior.** People sometimes treat these two truths about God as if they are in conflict with one another. If God loves, why does He judge? If God judges, how can He be merciful? The prophet Nahum puts both truths beside one another. He asks, "Who can stand before his indignation?" and then immediately says, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him" (Nah. 1:6–7). God's judgement of evil in the world does not negate his mercy, and his mercy does not cause him to turn a blind eye to sin. **A judge who ignores wickedness is not gracious... He is unjust.** God's mercy is glorious precisely because He remains perfectly just while providing a refuge for the guilty.

These truths bring us to the heart of the gospel. God does not save sinners by lowering His standards. Romans 3:23–26 says that all have sinned, yet God justifies sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus so that He might be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." At the cross, God judges the sins of the world. **Christ freely and willingly bears the judgment His people deserve so that those united to Him by faith will be reconciled to God.** "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Salvation is the work of the Triune God. This is why Genesis 7:16 is especially important: "And the LORD shut him in." Noah built the ark because God commanded him and he would have plenty of responsibility during the months ahead. **Noah's obedience was real and necessary, but his obedience was not the assurance of his safety.** God Himself secured Noah inside the refuge He had provided. It's important to understand the difference between presuming upon the grace of God and having true assurance. Presumption takes the position that God's divine judgement is nothing worth considering. It presumes that God's grace is freedom to remain in sin. That's the way Noah's generation lived until the flood came. **True Christian assurance acknowledges the reality of God's judgement but trusts in Christ as the only sufficient refuge.** We recognize the seriousness of sin and therefore treasure Christ all the more. The temptation for some is to depend on their Christian works for assurance of salvation, while others have almost no assurance because they give their sin more weight than God's preserving power. Both positions place too much emphasis on us rather than allowing the Gospel to direct us to Christ. Obedience in a believer is evidence of salvation, but those works are not what secure a person's righteousness before God.

Peter describes believers as those who have been born again "to a living hope" and who "by God's power are being guarded through faith" (1 Pet. 1:3–5). This doesn't mean that believers can neglect the call to holiness, repentance, or perseverance. Noah was secured inside the ark, but he still had responsibilities to live out before God. In the same way, assurance should never lead us to being careless. In fact, assurance frees us to enjoy obedience without pretending that our obedience is what makes Christ willing to save us. In those moments when we do sin, we can be tempted to defend ourselves or hide. We might minimize our sin or withdraw from God until we feel good enough again. **The safest place for believers when they sin is nearness to Christ in a position of humility and repentance (1 John 1:9).** We must never become comfortable with our sin, but our sin should never convince us that we cannot run to Christ our true intercessor. Our refuge is not dependent on how well we repent or how often we obey, our refuge and salvation is dependent on Christ himself.

To Ponder:

3. How does Genesis 7:16, "The LORD shut him in," encourage believers who might be struggling with assurance in their salvation? How does it humble those who overemphasize their role in preserving their salvation?
4. In what ways might the church be failing to demonstrate to the world that Christ is our only true refuge? How can we demonstrate this truth in word and deed?
5. Do you wrestle with the truth that God is both righteous judge and true refuge? How would you help someone understand this?