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Genesis

Chapter 7 - Reconciliation Means a Clean Start The Ministry of Cleansing (vs. 1-5)

Genesis 7:1-5: Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time. “You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. “For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.” Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

The Lord allows us insight into a very interesting time, doesn't He? When you consider the flood, has there ever

been a time like that? It was a time of cleaning the house, and I've oftentimes thought, isn't it wonderful of the Lord, that He didn't just literally completely start all over again? In other words, He could have just created another Adam. He could have just created new animals, but He didn't. He said, "We're going to take those that are here and now we're going to bring about newness." And do you realize that in many respects what God is saying is that "I didn't make a mistake here. It's this man that I wanted. But what we need to do is take him on a higher level of relationship." Because we know that in the very beginning, with Adam and Eve in the garden, all these things were given to them. You have that interesting picture of the Israelites going to the promised land and all these wonderful things are given to them. In fact, they actually move into houses that they didn't build. One of the ways that God allowed them to go in the houses that they didn't build was He just sent the hornet in, and the hornet chased them out. That's a good way to get people out of places. He goes, "There. You have a house." So, as they begin to go into the promised land, the thought is, "Well, now they have all these things given to them;

they're just going to be wonderful people." And you realize that oftentimes the more people are given, the more rebellious they become. It doesn't really make any sense because you would think that gratitude would really come out of giving an abundance, but Adam and Eve clearly proved that was not true because in the garden. All of the things that were given to them as Scripture says was good; then it ultimately ends in very good. Yet there's this sense of rebelliousness in our hearts.

Jeremiah 17:9 says the heart of man is deceitful. It's desperately sick. That just really clarifies it for me. "I think there's some niceness in me." He says, "You're sick." And David would say, "In sin my mother conceived me." We almost gasp when we see something bad going on in the world, and I would say you ought to gasp if you see something good going on in the world. Because the nature of man is not to get better, the nature of man is, as 2 Timothy says in Chapter 3, to proceed from bad to worse. That's the nature of man, and we see this as man is given every opportunity even after the fall. God allows

them to live such extensive lives. I mean, you have Adam living 930 years. You have Methuselah living 969 years. Even Moses will live 950 years. That's a long time to get your life straight. In many respects, it shows that just because you're older doesn't mean you get wiser.

So, as it progresses and we come to chapter 6, what we see is that things have gotten really bad. So bad if you look with me in Genesis 6:5, it says this,

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

The point is that now we have to have a fresh start.

So, the question is, how do we have a fresh start? How do we begin new? I mean, we live in a world in which has a lot of hate, and there's a lot of acrimony that's going on in this world, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's a lot of evil that's just even at this juncture suppressed.

What do we do? How do we begin? Even if you consider your own life, think of all the things that you did, that you go, “I just messed up so much. How can I start anew?” So, in many respects, the passage we’re going to be looking

at is going to be dealing with how to begin new. It, in many respects, is a blueprint for that. How is it that we can start fresh? How is it that we can start new?

Now, the wonderful thing about the Book of Genesis is it's not only that book that really displays the grace of God and the things that He creates and the wonderful things that He gives man, and of course, obviously man's rebellion in the midst of this, but then it begins to reveal in the midst of man's rebellion, God is working a plan of reconciliation. So, literally from day one, He begins to work to reconcile man back to Himself. The point is that obviously God doesn't want machines. What He wants is the heart that desires to love Him. So, the reconciliation process is arduous at best, and you have to be extremely patient. It's one of the things that Scripture reminds us of, of God's nature. His loving kindness is from everlasting to everlasting, and certainly God is patient, not willing that any should perish. The patience of God is what we bank on because if it were not for the patience of God, we would all be snuffed out immediately after we did something wrong. So, we begin to see the patience of

God in working this ministry of reconciliation, reconciling man back to Himself.

There's a passage in the New Testament that will parallel to this, and if you look with in 2 Corinthians, we'll tie this together in Chapter 5.

Paul writes,

(2 Corinthians 5:14) “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

(2 Corinthians 5:15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”

That's a sacrifice of Christ. Somebody loves you. It's God. God loves you. In this is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and He gave Himself for us. This is what love looks like.

(2 Corinthians 5:16) “Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new...”

We're starting new here. Something fresh here is happening.

“...he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

This is a clean start. If you think about it, is actually what's being said.

(2 Corinthians 5:18) “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

What we're going to be looking at, in particular with Noah, is not only God's plan to reconcile humanity back to Himself, but God using man in the process to work together with Him. In many respects, as God brings us into reconciliation, then He turns to us, and He says, “Ok, let's go reconcile more people.” And it's an interesting process because he goes on and says this in verse 19,

(2 Corinthians 5:19) “namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their

trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

In other words, we're in the process with Him. We're working together with Him.

(2 Corinthians 5:20) “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ...”

I think we're kind of learning what being ambassadors is about, aren't we?

“... we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

It's wonderful that Christ died on the cross, that we might be reconciled to Him, and we have this wonderful message, and God says, “Why don't you proclaim the message and work together with Me on this?”

In fact, if you look in 2 Corinthians 6:1, how does it start off?

“And working together with Him...”

So, the wonderful process of this is obviously that we're in the process of cleansing. That's where we begin. Where it

all begins, and how it begins, we're going to be looking at in particular here in Genesis 7.

If you turn with me in Genesis 7, as we see this blueprint for reconciliation as well as for ministry because of the one that we have ministering is Noah, and God has called him. We understand this according to Chapter 6 that in verse 8 it reads,

(Genesis 6:8) “Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the LORD.”

So, then He calls him.

It's defined very clearly here in Genesis 7:1,

“Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.”

We've talked about the fact that God is looking throughout all the earth, looking for a heart that's wholly His. Where does ministry begin? Where does cleansing begin? Because what we're going to be talking about is God is going to flood the earth. That's an interesting picture of cleansing, isn't it? And a total cleansing of the

earth. That's why Peter in particular, will refer to Noah getting into the ark as a baptism. There's a cleansing that's going on within this process. How does it begin? Well, it begins with righteousness in you. You want to see the world a better place. We look at the things around us and we go, "Why are these things happening? It's getting worse. Where do we begin? How do we clean up?"

Because people make a mess of their lives and everything looks chaotic and upside down, and everybody's fighting with everybody. Where do you begin? You start with cleaning up and you go, "Well, how do I start cleaning up? I mean, look at all the mess. It's overwhelming me." And He says, "Well, we start with you." I think it's interesting that a lot of people want to fix the whole world, but they don't want to start with themselves. So, the process here is going to be "start with you first."

Deuteronomy 6. if you've ever read the chapter, begins by saying, "Look, you need to love the Lord with all your heart, and you need to love others, and you need to teach this to your sons, but you need to be doing this because the way you're going to be teaching them is sort of like

what we were talking about with discipleship. As you're walking, as you're doing things, you're going to be pointing out by your very life the things that you believe in. In particular, you believe that God is more important than anything and you love Him more than anything. The way that you handle things, the things that you do are going to reveal whether or not this is legitimate or not. So, God begins to reveal to Noah, "You alone I have seen to be righteous." In other words, sometimes people go, "What exactly does righteous mean?" Well, a simple definition is "right wisdom". Because it literally is one that is wise in doing what is right and it's not right in my own eyes. It's right in the eyes of God. So, it's someone that is not only well versed in what they know God believes to be or declares as right, but it's somebody that lives according to what they know is right. So, once again, I think that people in this world could have a lot of debates about, "Well, I think this is right. I think that's right." That's the Book of Judges and you have anarchy. Every man did what was right in his own eyes, right? But what we're talking about is trying to learn what is pleasing to God, and we believe that God is the One that knows

what's right. Now, you don't have to over complicate that because you can get into the whole ethereal daydreaming, but the point of the matter is that there is a right and a wrong, and you open up the word of God and you begin to see what is right. Did you know it's not right to steal? Well, God will actually tell you that just in case your conscience hasn't kicked in yet because Scripture says we can actually sear our conscience, but there are specifics that the word of God will begin to reveal to you and the Spirit of God will affirm in you. Even your conscience will begin to say, "I know that to be true." And God says, "That's righteousness." And as you begin to live that, then that's righteousness in your life. Where does cleaning up everything begin? It begins with you. It then begins within your household from there.

Once again, you go to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, when it talks about elders, it talks about deacons within a church, what are the requisites? You must be one who manages your own household well.

So, the way the passage reads is this,

(Genesis 7:1) “Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household...””

There's the household.

“... for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.”

In other words, “You have a ministry, not just you, but now your household is going to be your responsibility. Enter into the ark.” Now, the thing I like about the ark is that it actually gives us a space that we're responsible for. Wouldn't it be horrible if God says, “Ok. Now, you're responsible for the whole world. You need to fix it.” I know some people actually think that, but God hasn't given that to us. Connie was looking at the measurements of the property and the measurements of the property from the front to the back almost match exactly the length of the ark. Here again, it depends on what you're using for the measurement. Of course, everybody's forearm is different, as a cubit is a forearm basically. They say that it could be anywhere from 450 feet for the ark to 501 feet. Well, that would put us right basically in the middle. I think we're somewhere in the 470 feet mark,

but what we're saying is that you have this interesting picture of a place that you're responsible for. I've oftentimes thought, I'm not responsible for somebody else's house, how they raise their kids. I mean, I'm preaching the word of God, but people coming to the church, I'm responsible now for this particular area that God has given me. God will give you a block of area that you're responsible for, whatever that is. He has given you that, but it starts with you. It starts with your own household and then it goes on from there. But within the sphere of influence that God has given you, there are lines of demarcation. Once again, I haven't been given the ability to go correct the President or correct everybody that's out there, but I do have the responsibility to preach the gospel here in this building and where God brings people into my sphere of influence. So, He starts off with that sense of you got to get your life right, your family has to be right, and then He begins to define ministry in a very unique way within the passage. This is what I think extremely interesting, because I think oftentimes there's a lot of confusion about "Where do I begin? How do I

start this?" Once again, you're going to have to start that foundation and get that foundation right with God.

So, now He begins to go into, in verse 2, the clean animals and the unclean animals. Very interesting. Now, let me just say this about the whole animal thing, that the animal thing is really God's way of preparing us for ministry. All creation is God's, right? And He created all things for a reason. I remember our kids when they were younger, they'd want this and they'd want that, and I said, "Well, you have to be responsible first." And we would oftentimes get a pet, and we'd go, "Your job. The dog gets fed by you; if it doesn't get fed, you're in trouble."

I think it's to be pointed, we don't need to turn there, but if you look in Proverbs 12:10, it reads this way,

"A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal..."

That's an interesting verse, isn't it? "A righteous man has regard." So, you begin to realize that God trains us by using His creation. Whether it's with a horticulture or agriculture, whether it's with somebody that is a husbandman in the sense of trimming vines or somebody

that is a herdsman or a shepherd; God is training that individual. Scripture is full of examples of this.

I wouldn't take a lot of time doing this, but if you look at Isaiah 5, even God talks about the fact that He actually relates Israel to being like a vine, and He says, "I'm Your husbandman and I trim you, and I do this."

If you go into Isaiah 28, He talks about this horticulture as far as how do you plant seeds and by virtue of the way that you do things, it demonstrates skill. You learn certain skills and the skills that you begin to learn are the very skills that you're going to use in ministering to people. Paul will talk about the hard-working farmer, and he'll use words like "patience".

As Paul will say in Corinthians, "I sowed, Apollo watered. You are God's field." Of course, one of the great parables of the Scripture is the parable of the soils, and it begins to describe different ones that receive the word of God in a very different way. I'm reminded that in ministry, it's God that causes the increase. I have seen people get involved in ministry and you almost see them strangling people trying to get them to receive the gospel or something,

and you're going, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You're supposed to plant the seeds, right, and wait for God to do it. God's the One that causes the growth. You're not the one that makes it happen." You plant a seed; you don't go strangling the seed, going, "Why aren't you growing?" You're going to crush the seed and it's not going to work too well. So, these things begin to describe, and of course, if you think about the different ones that were called into ministry, they were called and placed in positions first of perhaps not only caring for fields but caring for animals. So, Moses and his calling, how did he spend his time at the very beginning? Well, for 40 years he had to be a shepherd. I mean, if you're going to lead people, you're going to have to learn how to lead sheep. So, 40 years, he's going to be a shepherd, and then God's going to pull him out of that, and He's going to go, "Now, do you know how to lead sheep?" He goes, "I think I got it." Because hearing sheep all the time, it could drive somebody crazy unless they've had some practice with it. But you begin to learn how to minister and to be patient and to remember that you have a responsibility to care for these and that responsibility means that you're going to be involved

oftentimes, even day and night. So, interesting example. Of course, David was called while shepherding the sheep in the field. That's when he was called and actually anointed or called for that purpose. What we see is that preparation, and Paul will talk to the church at Ephesus, and he'll say, "Look, I'm about ready to leave. What I need you to do is shepherd the flock." This is why leaders, and why we oftentimes use the phrase "pastor" because pastor just simply means a shepherd and God has called us to shepherd flock. Jesus will say to Peter, "Do you love Me?" He says, "You know I love you." He says, "Well, tend My sheep. Shepherd My flock." So, these are training grounds. This is God preparing us for ministry. So, when we see the animals just to let you know, they are the training ground for ministry and in many respects, what we're seeing is this interesting blueprint that is given to us on how to minister.

So, it starts off this way,

(Genesis 7:2) "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female..."

We just read earlier that it said twos; two of every kind. So, that would be a male and a female, and that was it. He did actually say that, but his point was at that earlier state, that would be across the board; there'd be a two of every kind. Now, he's going to get specific, and he goes, "But we now want seven pairs of those that are clean."

If you look in the passage, it reads this way,

"You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female..."

That would be seven pairs, a male and female.

"... and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female."

I think one of the things that hit me right off the bat when I read that verse is, "Why do you want any unclean anyway? It's a good chance to get rid of them, throw them out of the ark. No unclean wanted, and just let the clean ones go in." Just makes a whole lot of sense to me, but there is a reason for that and the process in cleaning begins with discernment. When you look at Adam and God begins to work in Adam's life, one of the first

responsibilities he had was to name the animals and what we refer to that is that he had to have observational skills. In order to name an animal, you have to think, "Well, this is the way they act. So, we're going to name them according to this." So, God was honing in man observational skills. Now, He's going to be honing as he begins to mature. That's really what you're watching in the Book of Genesis, God maturing man into a place in which he ultimately has the heart of God. So, now what we're going to see in this passage is God is moving man to a place of discernment; what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad, what's clean, what's unclean. I would say husbands, you need to have some sort of discernment when you come to that day in February, in which you're supposed to be buying your wife something. There should be some facsimile of discernment. Now, what you want to do is you want to buy her, maybe at least fresh flowers. You don't want to buy rotten tomatoes. Now, I know that may seem, "Well, sure, Gary. That's obvious that you don't want to buy rotten tomatoes." I think some people would. You have to have some sort of discernment. You know, when I came to my 50th anniversary, I'm going,

“Ok, I don't want to buy her a vacuum cleaner.” I mean, that would kind of be insulting. She may want a vacuum cleaner. It's just not a real good time to do that. There has to be some sort of discernment in this. The point of the matter is, if you can't tell the difference between clean and unclean you have no reason to be in ministry. You have to be able to discern what is right, what is wrong, what is clean, what is unclean, and if you can't do that, you shouldn't be in ministry.

There is an interesting passage in the Book of Jeremiah. If you just take a moment, turn there with me in Chapter 15. You know how you have one of those go to passages? Jeremiah 15 is one of those go to passages. Let me just kind of put it into context. Jeremiah is getting discouraged in ministry. Do you ever get discouraged in ministry and people are not responding the way that they should? So, you're going, “Ok, God, You called me to clean up. I got my heart right. The ducks are in a row here at the family. So, why is my ministry not working? Why are things not getting cleaned up? Why are people responding the way they are?” And sometimes you get kind of overwhelmed

by the rejection. Obviously, Jeremiah will minister for 40 years and there won't be a turn around. This Chapter 15 starts off with God, in summary, saying, "Jeremiah, it's not you, it's them." So, there are going to be times, as Paul will say, you're going to want to give up. "Don't grow weary in well doing," Paul will say. But you're going to want to give up because you're not seeing the results that you're hoping to see, and sometimes you just actually begin to think, "I think it's me." That was basically the argument at the beginning of Jeremiah. Jeremiah goes, "You've got the wrong guy." But God says, "No. I've got the right guy."

But He states this,

(Jeremiah 15:1) "... “Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me...”

"...it wouldn't go. So, it's not you." I like the way that God put that. "Even if I brought in the heavies, they wouldn't convince them. So, it's not going to happen." So, in the process of this, Jeremiah is still going, "Yeah. So, why are things so horrible? Why are things so terrible? Why is it

that it seems like the more I minister, the more people don't like me?"

So, he uses this interesting point in Chapter 15, if you look with me,

(Jeremiah 15:17) "I did not sit in the circle of

merrymakers,

Nor did I exult.

Because of Your hand upon me I sat alone,

For You filled me with indignation."

In other words, "I was an outcast. The very people I'm supposed to minister to, I'm an outcast with. So, what do I do?" And God says this, it's a very interesting text,

(Jeremiah 15:19) "Therefore, thus says the LORD..."

I love that phrase, don't you? Because now you're going to hear, ok, this is a God thing.

"... "If you return, then I will restore you..."

Now, part of what is being said in the text is that "You've got to stop trusting in yourself, Jeremiah. You've got to return to Me and believe that I'm the source."

But then He goes on and says this,

“...Before Me you will stand...”

That is to say, “If you're counting on Me, if all your trust is on Me, then you'll be immovable. They won't be able to move you.”

Here's the key point that I want you to look at,

“... if you extract the precious from the worthless...”

Now, what he's talking about, “*yāqār*”, the Hebrew word that He uses for “precious” within the text, is something very rare and valuable. So, God is saying there's still valuable things there. I oftentimes think about if you're hunting for gems or you're hunting for gold; I've seen people literally move mountains to get maybe a little bit of gold, and you're going, “Wow, that was a lot of work, and there wasn't that much gold.” But there was gold and there were precious stones, and what God is saying is there is something valuable, but you've got to find it.

The way it reads is,

“... if you extract the precious from the worthless...”

That is to say, from the things that have no value, and there's a lot of that, but you've got to stay focused

because in the midst of all this chaos, God is going to reveal to you, “Ok, clean. Clean. Pull them in.” Very interesting picture.

And if you'll do this, He says,

“... You will become My spokesman.

They for their part may turn to you,

But as for you, you must not turn to them.”

The text basically says, “If anyone moves it's got to be them because you're not moving. I told you what to say. Don't back off on that.” I think in the midst of things not going the way you think they should go, the tendency is, “Maybe I need to change the message.” And God goes, “Don't you change that message. I told you what to say, say it, and those that are valuable, they'll start coming out. You'll see them. There's an interesting point as we look at Noah, it says, “the animals will start coming to you.” A very interesting point, and you say, “How is he going to get seven pairs of clean?” They'll start coming to him. Where does this ratio come from? God is orchestrating the ratio. So, wonderful picture. So, what the passage is saying is that you've got to come into a

thought process and a heart process in which you're able, and I think this is one of the things the word of God does when you consider the word of God actually begins to clarify to you what is clean and what is unclean. It reveals this.

I'm running short on time, but if you were to turn to Leviticus 10 and Leviticus 11, one of the things that Chapter 10 says is that God wants you to discern between what is holy and what is common. I know a lot of people go, "I know what's holy and what's common." I don't think you do. So, he then goes into Chapter 11 and in Chapter 11, if you remember, the sons of Aaron actually died because they disrespected God in this process. The very next chapter is dealing with clean and unclean animals. Now, what's to be noted in here with Noah is that we have somebody that is selecting clean and unclean, and Leviticus hadn't been written yet. So, we don't have the ability to use the Law to discern. What seems to be used is the common sense that God has given them, "That's clean, that's unclean." And some of them, interestingly enough, are probably pretty obvious. I mean,

you look at a sheep and then you look at a pig and you go, "Ok, unclean. This is clean." So, some are pretty obvious, but he goes on, he says, "Some aren't that obvious." And he used the example in Leviticus of the rabbit. Now, that's unclean. So, when you go through, He begins to give you through the Law, clarity of those things. But the point of the matter is that God wants you to make distinctions, and sometimes it's close. Paul says when he's talking to the Corinthians, "Look, I'm not going to do anything that offends people." And some people go, "Well, does it really matter where I eat?" and Paul says, "If you eating would cause somebody to stumble, that's what we call an unclean or bad thing." So, there are some things that clearly are obvious, obviously that the pig eats its own feces. But the text is telling us that Noah is able to see these things. What Leviticus tell us is that it's sometimes not always real obvious, but God will give him the discernment in this.

Now, as he begins to choose, it says he's going to choose seven pairs. Now the question is why seven pairs? Of course, we know that the number seven is dealing with a

sense of completion, more specifically, as we look at this, and God is really revealing that completed act in the source. We know that we use it to seven oneself as far as making commitments, but it is kind of the end of something or the completion of something, or the fulfillment of something. In other words, God's saying, "This is completely clean." So, the sevens is interesting. Now, he's going to have seven because the seven are going to minister to Noah. "You're going to eat from these seven that are clean. They're going to be domestic animals, so you're going to benefit from them. They're going to be useful to you. You're going to use them to plow. So, these are going to be beneficial to you." And in many respects and I don't like to go too much into the mathematics of it, but fundamentally what He's saying is, you want to surround yourself and be involved with those that are useful, those that are beneficial and those that will help in some way, and these you could literally define as the clean animals. These are the ones that would bring benefit to you. The unclean are those that would not bring benefit to you. Now, at this juncture, we're going "Well, let's just get rid of them because they're not going

to bring benefit.” Well, they are going to bring benefit to you in a very interesting way, and that is you're going to minister to them. Though they cannot benefit you and you're going to help them even though they won't help you back. So, you have this interesting picture, and once again, I don't want to get totally in the mathematics of it, but it seems clear that like 2 Corinthians 6 says, look, you don't want a fellowship with unbelievers. So, what we're talking about is that the fellowship is where you get benefit. The fellowship is where those around you help lift you up and care for you as well as you caring for them. When we come in as a body of Christ, we have mutual benefits, and we all have spiritual gifts that benefit each other. God says, “You want to surround yourself with these people. Don't be unequally yoked.” And if you look at Christ, most of His time was not spent with even the multitudes. Most of His time was spent with His disciples. We would call them the clean ones. These are the ones that were going to bring benefit. Ultimately, what Christ said to His disciples is, “I chose you to bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.” His point is, “I chose you to benefit.” So, you have this group that you come together

with that will benefit. Now, Paul will then talk about, but we minister to the ungodly and we do all things, and we become all things to all men so that by some means we might win some.” The goal is to clearly minister to the lost and you're going to find these ones outside of your fellowship because you're not going to be able to fellowship with them. What benefit are you going to have? That's why Scripture says, “What fellowship has light with darkness?” What benefit are you going to get from that? But what He's going to say, is that you're going to be helping those that will never give back to you. You're going to be helping those that will never in some way benefit you, but this is part of your calling. So, Noah will have to in this ark, take care of animals that I don't know if God kept them back, but we know that some of them might have a tendency to swallow you up. Because you have lions, and I won't go through all the process, but you have some that just aren't plain friendly, but he's keeping them too. God wants us to minister to people like that. He doesn't want us to fellowship with them. He doesn't want them to be the ones that sustain us. You don't walk up to an unclean and go, “Say, could you help

me out today?” Scripture says in John, “Look, you don't take stuff from unbelievers. Let the body of Christ support you.” You don't take it from them because you don't want to be beholding. It's like taking money from the mafia. Why would I want to do that? You behold yourself to a group of people that aren't really on the same side as you and aren't trying to build you up. But that doesn't mean that you're not going to help and minister to those people. It's a very interesting picture that is given to us. So, the passage goes on, and it says that because of this, he did exactly what God had told him to do.

I like that there's a passage in 2 Timothy; 2 Timothy 2:21 reads this way,

“...if anyone cleanses himself from...”

Actually, the context is talking about cleansing himself from things that are useless and will lead to ruin in his own life.

“... if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”

That's a clean animal, "prepared for every clean work."
Ephesians 4 will kind of give this interesting picture that when you and I are ministering, we use only such a word as is good for the moment. So, there's interesting discernment there. You have to be able to discern timing in order to minister. What's a good time? What's a bad time? And you have to discern, what's a good word, what's a bad word? And it's in that discernment that you use these things that God has given you and you're able to separate between the two, and in making that distinction, you now begin to minister in a right way. God has given us blueprints and I hope in some way you saw that today.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your guidance and Your directions. In the very beginning, we realize that You were using all of Your creation to teach us things. You will ultimately bring us to

Yourself, and Lord, we see Your love for us and Your care for us and Your patience with us, and how gracious you are to allow us a place in our life, to even practice so that we are not hurting that which is most valued to You, that is man. Lord, prepare us to work together with You.

Prepare our hearts to love You. Prepare our hearts to know what You're all about and what Your plan is that we might get on board and work together with You.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed, what I'm asking you to do is think the ministry of Christ. It is the ministry of reconciliation. It's a ministry of care, but it begins with helping. It begins with ministering to others in oftentimes very tangible ways. The Scripture says if you see your brother in need, but you don't help him, how can the love of Christ be in you? And you realize that it's by your very actions many times and oftentimes very menial chores that we begin to foster a door for opportunity to begin to proclaim, "And you know what? God loves you this much." God has given you a mission. It is reconciliation. God has reconciled you through His Son, Jesus Christ. He has called you to the same thing.