

Genesis

God Uses Sinful People
7.16.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 9:18-29

SERMON NOTES:

In Romans 15 Paul said, “whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” He was talking about the Old Testament. The things written in the Old Testament are for the church, and they were written for our instruction, encouragement, and hope.

I once disciplined an older man named Roger. Roger was living on the streets using every dollar he could find for alcohol. The only reason he came to us was because no one else would take him. We helped Roger get into our recovery home and get sober. He started going to church, hearing the gospel and eventually Roger got saved.

He also started reading the Bible. I remember one day he came to me and said, “Brandon, I thought the Bible would be full of a bunch of holy people in long white robes, but these people are really messed up.” I said, “Yeah, they’re just like you and me. How does that make you feel?” Roger said, “It gives me hope.”

The Bible is not afraid to be honest about the sins of even its best characters. Abraham lied. Jacob deceived his father. Moses was a murderer. Rahab was a prostitute. Samson was a womanizer. David was an adulterer. Jonah ran from God. Joseph doubted. Martha worried about everything. Peter denied the Lord three times. Paul was a persecutor. And here we see Noah gets drunk and exposes himself. I’d say God has shown a pattern of using sinful people.

Critics of the Bible look at stories like Noah’s and think it’s a reason to criticize God. How could God use such evil people? But Christians look at stories like this and find Paul’s words in Romans to be true—it gives us instruction, encouragement, and hope because God will redeem and even use imperfect people like us.

More importantly, man is not the Bible's main character—God is! Jesus Christ is the focal point of Scripture. He is the sinless One. He is the Savior that sinful man needs. And that's why He came—to save and redeem and even the best of men like Noah.

As we approach the final episode in Noah's life, the flood waters have now cleared. Noah and his family exited the ark, and the first thing Noah did was worship the Lord. In response, God gave Noah's family the same blessing and command he bestowed upon Adam. He told them to be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. Like Adam, God gave them dominion over the animals. He instituted laws and government. And then God made a covenant with Noah promising that He would never again flood the world.

In many ways, Noah is the new Adam. He is God's appointed ruler. As he steps off the boat, he enters into a new world and a fresh garden. He's given a new covenant with new promises. But, like Adam before him, Noah will prove that he and his sons are not perfect. The flood may have washed away the world, but it did not wash away their sin.

Let's get into our passage. We begin with Noah's sons.

1. Noah's Sons (V:18-19)

VS18 -- The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)

Eight people entered the ark and were saved from the flood: Noah, his three sons, and their wives. These are Noah's sons.

Shem

Though Shem is the middle child, he is mentioned first; probably because from his line came Abraham and the people of Israel. Which also means Jesus descended from Shem.

Japheth

Japheth is the oldest son even though he's mentioned last. Scholars have traced his lineage to Asia and Europe.

Ham

Ham is the youngest son, and right from the beginning Moses wants you to know Ham is the father of Canaan.

The original readers of Genesis would have been very interested to learn that Ham was the father of Canaan, because he's the father of the Canaanites. The Canaanites were the inhabitants of the land before Israel took possession. Before it was called Israel, it was the land of Canaan. It was the land of Canaan the Lord gave to Abraham's offspring as an inheritance. More on that later.

V19 -- *These are Noah's sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.*

These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed (populated). In a real sense, every man and woman is a descendant of Noah, and every person's lineage can be traced back to either Shem, Ham or Japheth.

This is a preview to chapter 10—which is often referred to as the Table of the Nations. This event in Noah's life is bigger than just some drunken stupor. This story sets up how the nations were formed.

It demonstrates God's providence and sovereignty:

1. By ensuring the cultural mandate would be fulfilled "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."
2. By appointing the dwelling places and boundaries for not only each nation but every person. Acts 17:26, Paul told the Greek Philosophers, "[The Lord] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him."

When you were born in history and where you live now are not accidents but determined by God. He placed you in this time and in this place that you might seek and know Him.

This is also a good point for us to say that we all descended from one man. There is one race and it's the human race. Which means, racism or any kind prejudice based on skin color, ethnicity or nationality is not only condemned by Scripture, but it is also unreasonable and illogical. We may look and behave differently. We may come from different places, but we are all children of one man—first Adam and then Noah after the flood.

These are the sons of Noah. Let's move on to the focal point of this story, and that is Noah's and Ham's sin.

2. Noah's Sin (V.20-21)

VS20 -- Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

God commanded Adam to cultivate the new world. Noah continues that practice by planting a vineyard. He also continues the cultural mandate. We have already seen that mankind (pre-flood) was capable of developing music, cities, and infrastructure (Ch.4). They were workers of metal and took care of livestock. Now Noah continues this call by becoming a farmer.

This whole episode could have taken place several years if not decades after Noah got off the ark. We know that because:

1. At least 2 years had passed because that's the minimum amount of time required to grow grapes.
2. Also, if Noah cursed Canaan immediately after the incident took place, that means several years had passed because not only was Canaan not born until after they exited the ark, but he was Ham's fourth son.
3. I say all that because it's easy to read these events as if they happen one right after another. But much time has passed.

At some point, Noah's vineyard came to fruition, and he made the grapes into wine.

VS21 -- He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

The other night I was sitting in my living room talking about this story with my family. My seven-year-old daughter was shocked that righteous Noah would get drunk and expose himself like this. I was intrigued by her response, because by this time I have become so familiar with this story it doesn't surprise me anymore. But for Moses' original readers, they would have been just as surprised as my daughter. In fact, that's the response the Bible wants from its readers.

The message is Noah is not perfect. He's not the Savior. He's not the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. He's a sinner. There is one greater than Noah still yet to come.

It wasn't a sin for Noah to drink wine. It was sin for Noah to become drunk. This is where many Christians go to one extreme or the other. We often call this the two ditches, and

Christians often fall in one of them when it comes to alcohol. In one ditch, some Christians will say that drinking any alcohol is a sin. In the other ditch are Christians who drink to excess with concern at all.

Let's talk about those two ditches for a moment.

Drinking isn't Sinful

First of all, it is not a sin to drink alcohol.

1. Jesus made wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2). And it wasn't watered down wine. The master of the feast said it was good wine.
2. Jesus also served wine at the last supper. For the first communion, they didn't use grape juice. They used wine.
3. Jesus himself drank wine—presumably at both the wedding and at the last supper. But we know for sure he drank wine on the cross. Just before He died, they served Jesus wine vinegar in a sponge and he drank it.
4. Jesus will also drink with us in the Kingdom of God. He told His disciples He will not share the Lord's Supper with them again until they enter His father's Kingdom.
5. Wine is presented as a blessing from God that gladdens the heart.
6. It was used in the OT worship of God.
7. It was also used for medicinal purposes to heal the body.

All this to say, if we're going to be biblical about alcohol, we cannot say drinking alcohol is a sin. Because the Bible does not say that. If you think it is wrong to drink, that's fine, don't drink, but you cannot hold others to that same standard. Now, for those of you who are comfortable drinking alcohol, but you have a brother or sister who stumbles at this point, it's your responsibility to refrain from drinking around them. Be gracious and take into account their conscience on the issue.

Drinking alcohol is not a sin, but getting drunk is. This is the other ditch we must avoid. Some Christians think because of grace and freedom, they can drink as much as they want, but this is just as wrong as saying alcohol is sinful. In fact, I would argue drunkenness is more dangerous because of Scripture's repeated warnings against drunkenness.

Consider these passages:

- Drunkenness ruins lives. “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.” (Proverbs 23:20-21).
- God’s judgment is on the drunkard. “Woe (a pronouncement of judgment) to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!” (Isaiah 5:11, 22)
- Drunkards cannot serve in church leadership. Elders must be “sober minded...and not a drunkard.” Likewise, deacons cannot be “addicted to much wine” (1 Timothy 3:2-3, 8, also see Proverbs 31:4-5).
- Drunkards are considered unbelievers in the Bible. “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3; also see Romans 13:13, Luke 21:34, Isaiah 28:1).
- Drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, also see Galatians 5:19-21).

Noah’s sin is not drinking. It’s drunkenness. This brings us next to our next point.

3. Noah’s Shame (V.22-23)

VS22 -- And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

Once again, we’re told that Ham is the father of Canaan, because evil actions will characterize his son’s descendants.

Before Noah passed out in the drunken stupor, he took off his clothes. And though he was in the privacy of his own tent (which would have been like his bedroom), nakedness is associated with shame in scripture. When Adam and Eve sinned, the first thing they did was sew fig leaves together to cover their nakedness because they were ashamed.

Ham knew his father was in a compromised and shameful position. He should have done what his brothers did. Ham should have covered his father’s nakedness and never said a

word about it. That would have honored his father. But instead, he runs to his brothers to tell them about their father's shame.

Though the text doesn't mention it explicitly, I think it's fair to say Ham did not have the best intentions when he told his brothers about Noah's nakedness. He was being divisive. He was trying to bring shame upon his father. Maybe they had a falling out or Ham didn't want to follow his father's leadership any longer. Regardless of his motivations, by telling his brothers, and failing to cover his father's nakedness, Ham has dishonored his father and sowed division in his family and the Lord hates both sins.

The fifth commandment is that we honor our father and mother. Failure to do so, according to OT Law, warranted the death penalty. Children are given one primary command in Scripture and that is to honor their parents. It doesn't matter what they're like or how they're treated you. It doesn't matter how old you are. This is a universal, unqualified command—honor your father and mother.

Maybe this speaks to you today. Perhaps, your relationship to your parents has been strained. You need to reconcile or change how you treat them. The Lord wants you to honor your parents. He promises blessings if you do, but curses if you don't.

Ham's actions also highlight the sin of division. The Lord hates divisiveness, and He opposes divisive people. Proverbs 6:16 says, "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and *one who sows discord among brothers.*"

Paul warned the church about divisive people as well.

1. Romans 12:17-18 -- *"I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive."*
2. In Titus 3, he said, *"But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."*

Divisive people jump at the first opportunity they can find to expose error and sin. But love covers a multitude of sins.

Ham's sinful actions are contrasted with Shem and Japheth's.

VS23 -- *Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.*

This is what Ham should have done. Instead of exposing their father's shame—Shem and Japheth cover Noah. In fact, they go out of their way to ensure they don't dishonor their father. They get a garment, hold it up to their shoulders and walk backward towards Noah, making sure their face is turned away the entire time, so they don't see their father naked.

Ham acted like the serpent who revealed the nakedness of Adam and Eve. Shem and Japheth act like God when they cover their father. Ham broke the fifth commandment. Shem and Japheth exemplified it.

That's because they love their father. The Bible says love covers a multitude of sins.

Proverbs 10:12 -- *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.*

This is good instruction for the church. You're not always going to like or get along with the people you go to church with. Can I get an amen?! But you should seek to show people grace. Your love for Christ should spill over in love for your brothers and sisters. And that love should cover a multitude of sins. I am not saying that we should overlook major infractions. The Bible is not calling us to cover up sin in a deceptive way. But it is telling to show grace more often than not. Give people the same grace and mercy you would want if the roles were reversed.

At the very least, let's avoid being like Ham who exposed instead of covering Noah's sins.

4. Noah's Prophecy (V.24-27)

VS24-27 - 24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his

brothers.” 26 He also said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. 27 May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.”

When Noah comes to, he realizes that he’s wearing clothing he did not go to sleep in (that’s happened to me before). Naturally, he would have wondered what happened the night before. Presumably, he would have asked his sons, and that’s when Shem and Japheth would have told Noah what Ham did.

Noah responds by cursing Canaan and blessing Shem and Japheth. Now before we get into what all this means, you need to understand that Noah didn’t come stumbling out of his tent still drunk the night before and start throwing out curses on his grandson in some drunken craze. Again, I know these events seem to happen one right after another, but it’s possible that Noah pronounced these blessings and curses just before he died. That seems to be the patriarchal pattern of passing down blessings and curses. It was on their deathbeds that both Isaac and Jacob passed on their blessings to their sons. It’s possible Noah did the same.

The timing, however, isn’t as important as the content of the prophecy. The obvious question here is: why did Noah curse Ham’s son, Canaan, and not Ham himself?

Several reasons have been proposed but I will give you my take on this. Noah didn’t curse Ham because he was already blessed by God (9:1). God saved Ham from the flood and when they got off the boat, God blessed Ham along with everyone else. So, it could be that Noah can’t curse the one God has blessed. By the way, if you’re in Christ, God has blessed you and no man can curse you. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, Noah could very well be saying that Ham’s sin in this passage will result in the curse of Canaan. And what I mean by that is the sins of the fathers are often passed down to future generations. In Exodus 34:7, it says the Lord will visit *“the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”* This is not to say that the sons will pay for their father’s sin. But it is to say that the father’s sins will have effects on his posterity.

We know this all too well. Families go through generations of unbroken sin. I see families all the time riddled with addiction, and you can trace the destruction of addiction back generations to their grandparents or great grandparents. Single mothers who go through boyfriend after boyfriend shouldn’t be shocked when their little girl grows up and can’t

keep a relationship. Little boys grow up angry and mistreat women because that's all they ever saw from dad. God isn't necessarily punishing Canaan and his descendants for Ham's sin. He's saying that Canaan's descendants will be characterized by Ham's sin.

No doubt, Ham's sinful example was passed to Canaan. But this still doesn't answer the question: why Canaan? Ham had four sons. Why did Noah choose to curse Canaan? Why not Cush, Put or Egypt? The answer lies in who Canaan would become.

Remember, Moses is writing this book. His first readers were the newly liberated Israelites, and they would have read Genesis right before they took the promised land under Joshua. So, naturally, they would have asked at least two questions. 1) Why do we deserve this land? 2) Why should we kill people who currently live there?

This passage begins to answer those questions. When God called Abraham, the Lord promised him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and that they would inherit the land of Canaan. Canaan is the land given to Israel by God. And then, when the Lord called Moses, He told him that he was to free Israel from bondage in Egypt, and then they were to take the promised land and drive out the inhabitants of the land who were the Canaanites. And they weren't just to drive them out. They were to slaughter them.

Deuteronomy 20:16 -- 16 But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

The Canaanites were wicked people. They practiced human sacrifice, even offering their babies to false gods. They were idolaters and sexually immoral. If you look over at chapter 10:19, *"And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah."* Canaan's descendants were the inhabitants of Sodom.

The curse of Canaan provides the theological and moral justification for Israel to not only take the land from the Canaanites but to become God's instrument of judgment against them.

That was Noah's prophecy. Finally, we come to Noah's death.

5. Noah's Death (V.28-29)

VS28 -- After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Even though he had this one unfortunate incident, overall, he lived an exemplary life. He walked with God. He obeyed the Lord during the time of the flood—not just to build the ark. Peter calls Noah a preacher of righteousness. He not only trusted the Lord himself; Noah implored others to do so as well.

It's just a reminder—following Christ is not about being perfect—it's about being faithful and finishing well.

Application

1. God uses sinful people.

If this story teaches us anything, it is that God uses sinful people to accomplish His purposes. God used Noah to save the human race. Yet look how he behaved. He got drunk and showed his rear end.

Despite all that, God was pleased to not only show Noah His grace but used him for His redemptive purposes. Do you think the Lord could use you? Don't let your past or current struggles keep you from serving Christ. Don't wait until you have everything figured out before you begin to fulfill God's plans for you.

2. Be a peacemaker and unifier in the church.

Don't be like Ham. Be like Shem and Japheth. Ham exposed Noah's sin and took the first opportunity he got to take a shot at his father. Shem and Japheth covered their fathers' sins and showed him honor.

Christians should be peacemakers and grace givers. We have been reconciled to God who made peace with us through Christ's shed blood. Yet, in so many cases we're quick to criticize our brothers. We're all too eager to jump on the first opportunity we see to expose someone's sins.

Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated. Be peacemakers and unifiers in the church.

3. There is hope for wayward children.

Ham dishonored his father and it led to the downfall of one his son's posterity. Generational sin is real. And so are wayward children. But the gospel is the power of God to break generational sin and bring the wayward child home. So long as one has breathe and life, there is hope for salvation.

4. Be prepared to meet God.

Noah lived 950 years following the Lord, but in the end he died. He died and unless the Lord returns that will be said of every one of us. And he died. And she died.

And when we die, we don't cease to exist. We will face God. Each person has two appointments awaiting them—the day of your death and the day of your judgment; and those days are as sure as the air you breathe.

Make sure you're prepared to meet God. And the only way to be sure that you're ready to meet God is by believing in God's Son—Jesus Christ—the one who can forgive your sins.

REVIEW:

- ❖ What did Ham do when he discovered Noah's nakedness? What does this reveal about him?
- ❖ What did Shem and Japheth do about Noah? What does this reveal about them?
- ❖ Why did Noah curse Canaan and not Ham?
- ❖ Is God unfair for cursing Canaan?

REFLECT:

- ❖ Do you feel like there is too much in your past for God to use you? How does this passage encourage you?
- ❖ Are there any "small" sins in your life that you tend to overlook while pointing out the sin in others?

RESPOND:

- ❖ What are some ways you can bring unity in the church?
- ❖ Are you prepared to meet God?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Genesis 9:23 -- *Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Proverbs 1:12 -- *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Worship Pastor - **Brett Perkins**
- ❖ Ministry - **Journey Worship Co.**
- ❖ **Pray for our long-term families:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks (departing in October)
- ❖ **Pray for our mid-term sent ones:**
 - Abby & Katherine (gap year - returning in August)
 - Kaesi (gap year - departing in August)
- ❖ **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia team departs in September
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Bouyei in China**
 - **Population in country:** 3,400
 - **Population in country:** 3,295,000
 - **Global population:** 3,371,600
 - **Christian Adherent:** 0.70%
 - **Evangelical:** 0.17%
 - **Primary Religion:** Ethnic Religions
 - **Primary Language:** Bouyei
 - **Summary:** The Bouyei are a Thai-speaking people who have lived in China for about 1,000 years. They worship many gods and spirits. Both Catholics and Protestants have worked among them. Due to persecution, some have moved to Vietnam. Despite having their own language, education today is in Mandarin, the standard language of China. Only portions of the Bible exist in their language.
 - **Prayer Focus:** Pray that the Chinese Church would make a major effort to begin a movement to Christ among the Bouyei people this decade. Pray for dreams and visions of Christ, leading to abundant life among the Bouyei people. Pray for a spiritual hunger that would draw the Bouyei people to embrace the King of kings. Pray for intercessors who would never give up on praying for the Bouyei people.

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