
GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

A SHAMED PATRIARCH & GOD'S SOVEREIGN BLESSING

GENESIS 9:18-29

18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) 19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 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. 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.”

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

INTRODUCTION

Sinful thoughts, words, and deeds are prevalent in our world today, so we should not be surprised to find them throughout the pages of Scripture. We are, however, often surprised to find these sinful things in the lives of those who we perceive to be among the heroes of the story. We have tendencies both to gaze upon forbidden sin and to pretend it is not as pervasive as it truly is. This account in Genesis forces us to acknowledge the depth of human depravity, to understand the need for humility, and to remember the sovereign and glorious blessing of God.

SETTING THE STAGE

On October 9, 2015 twenty-seven women (ranging in age from 45 to 80) gathered on NBC's Dateline to air their accusations against Bill Cosby. The truthfulness of their claims, or lack thereof, was not the focus of this episode. The overwhelming intent of this Dateline special was to publically and repeatedly accuse Bill Cosby. Each woman who spoke offered the viewer a description of heinous things. Verbal voyeurism was the stuff of this show.

Like this episode, in Genesis 9 we encounter another episode with similar characters. There is a sinner and an accuser, but in the record of Genesis 9 we also meet humble and faithful coverers. The human actors we read about in Genesis 9 are examples for us all, and God's own character and promise is exemplified here.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) NOAH'S SELF-EFFACING SHAME**
- (2) HAM'S SELF-RIGHTEOUS SIN**
- (3) SHEM'S AND JAPHETH'S SELF-AWARE COVERING**
- (4) GOD'S SELF-CENTERED BLESSING**

EXPOSITION:

(1) NOAH'S SELF-EFFACING SHAME

◆ NOAH WAS RIGHTEOUS AMONG SINNERS

- We are introduced to Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).
- Even God Himself declares to Noah, "I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1).
- God lists Noah with Daniel and Job as examples of the most righteous men ever (Ezekiel 14)!
- Peter calls Noah a "herald of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5).
 - Of this we can be sure: For 600 years, Noah lived a peculiarly righteous life among (possibly) the most sinful people of all time.

- Moses tells us of the utter corruption of humanity when he said, “*every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Ge 6:5).

◆ NOAH KNOWINGLY SHAMED HIMSELF

- Some have argued that Noah didn’t know what wine would do, and this is the accidental cause of his drunkenness.¹
 - Delitzsch - “In ignorance of the fiery nature of wine, Noah drank and was drunken, and uncovered himself in his tent.”²
- However, it seems to me that Noah was fully aware of what he was doing.
 - First, Jesus makes reference to the “*days of Noah*,” and He notes that the people were “*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*” (Matt. 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27).
 - This seems to indicate more than simple liquid consumption, but I admit that this point alone is not a strong one.
 - Second, in Genesis 9:21 Noah’s drunkenness is directly associated with his “*nakedness*” or shame (v22).
 - This is no coincidence. Noah is demonstrated to be a sinful man in this passage, and it is calculated intention.
 - Third, Noah’s sinful act parallels Adam’s (Gen. 9:21; Gen. 3:6).
 - By design, Moses (inspired by God’s Spirit) records the parallel accounts of the two original fathers.
 - Adam, in the garden of Eden, eats from the forbidden tree and exposes himself as a guilty sinner before God.
 - Noah, in the post-Flood vineyard, drinks himself into a drunken stupor and lies shamefully naked before God and others.

¹A note on wine from the Reformation Study Bible (see bibliography): *Scripture both looks favorably on wine (Num. 15:5–10; Deut. 14:26; Ps. 104:15; John 2:1–11) and soberly warns of its dangers (Is. 5:22; Prov. 21:17; 23:20, 21, 29–35; Is. 28:7), particularly the moral laxity exemplified by self-exposure in a state of drunkenness (Lam. 4:21; Hab. 2:15).*

²Hughes, 150.

(2) HAM'S SELF-RIGHTEOUS SIN

◆ HAM SHOULD HAVE REVERED HIS FATHER

- First, reverence is due Noah because he was Ham's father.
 - The OT is clear about the honor due father and mother.
 - Deuteronomy 21:18-21 – “*18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, 20 and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ 21 Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*”
 - Jesus reiterates the principle of honoring father and mother in the NT.
 - Jesus said that a neglect of God's command to honor father and mother is an outright rejection of God's commands (Mark 7:9-10).
- Second, reverence was due Noah for the righteous reputation he had established.
 - Of course, no sin should be taken lightly, but a pattern of righteous living deserves a humble approach when correction may be warranted.
- Third, reverence was due Noah because it was on his account that Ham was still alive.
 - God's chose to establish His rescuing covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18). Noah's sons, his wife, and his sons' wives all benefitted from their association with Noah.

◆ HAM SHOULD HAVE REVERED HIS FELLOWMAN

- First, the sin of others should evoke pity, sympathy, and compassion.
 - Galatians 6:1-2 – “*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit*

of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

- Second, we are to devote our minds, eyes, and ears to good things.

- Philippians 4:8 – “*Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **just**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, if there is **any excellence**, if there is **anything worthy of praise**, think about these things.*”

◆ HAM SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT LESS OF HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

- Ham “*saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside*” (Gen. 9:22)
 - We need no lengthy discourse here! Oh, we are very familiar with this kind of action. The brevity of this verse is no indication that the folly contained within is small. No! The folly is monstrous; and we are greater fools still if we only sit in judgment, rather than learn from our predecessor.
 - Ham became aware of his father’s shame, and his immediate response is slanderous gossip.
 - This activity of slander is devilish! It is not small or insignificant.
 - On occasion, in the NT, the word translated “*slanderer*” is *diabolos* – devil (Titus 2:3).
 - Satan is called the “*accuser*” of Christians (Rev. 12:10).
 - Ham’s slander is, by definition, from a place of self-righteous judgment.
 - Slander and gossip are only possible when one perceives another as less worthy or less righteous.
 - Jonathan Edwards – “Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, **as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities of failings as others**; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings **promote nothing by**

shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.”³

- Notice also, Ham’s brothers were brought in from “*outside*” (v22).
 - Ham is not satisfied to personally revel in his father’s shame; he seeks out his brothers in an attempt to spread the sin of jeering slander further.
 - Ham demonstrates what Paul tells us is the depth of sinful corruption (Rom. 1:29-32).
 - The wickedness of our sinful hearts seems to know no bounds! Not only do we want to flaunt our pseudo-righteousness (in mockery of true righteousness), we also summon others to applaud our detestable pageant!

(3) SHEM’S AND JAPHETH’S SELF-AWARE COVERING

◆ SHEM AND JAPHETH DID THINK LESS OF THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

- First, they did not sit in haughty judgment over their father.
 - The passage moves immediately from the sin of Ham (v22) to Shem and Japheth’s intentional covering of Noah’s shame (v23).
 - These two brothers left Ham’s gossip hanging in the air, and they went to stop the whole ordeal.
- Second, they took precaution against their own sinful desires.
 - Shem and Japheth walked backwards to cover their father, and the passage specifically says, “*they did not see their father’s nakedness*” (v23).
 - These two brothers did not even give themselves a chance to allow their sin to arise within. They avoided the very sight of shame.

³Lawson, Steven J. *The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards*. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Pub., 2008. 81.

◆ SHEM AND JAPHETH DID REVERE THEIR FELLOWMAN AND THEIR FATHER

- They sought to cover Noah's shame, rather than further expose it.
 - First, we are not to think here that Shem and Japheth were overlooking sin or dismissing it.
 - No! They sought to cover Noah's nakedness, and this is an open acknowledgment that they understood his situation to be a sinful one.
 - We may learn from this that sin is not to be winked at or dismissed – ever. It is to be addressed for what it is – SIN.
 - Second, we are to see a humble reverence in Shem's and Japheth's action of covering shame.
 - For the dignity of man (God's image-bearer) and for the gravity of their father (Noah was a righteous man and a recipient of God's covenant), these two sons acted out of reverence and humility.
 - We may learn at least two things here:
 - 1) As sinful as any human might be, he or she is still God's image-bearer.
 - This should give us a sense of sorrow and grief when we discover sin, and not self-righteous hypercriticism.
 - 2) All Christians are children of promise and recipients of God's covenant.
 - This should only increase our sorrow over sin and our desire for prudent covering of shame.
 - Let us not forget that Christ called us first to private confrontation over sin in our brother (Matt. 18:15).

(4) GOD'S SELF-CENTERED BLESSING

◆ NOAH AND HAM ARE EXAMPLES OF ALL SINNERS

- While Noah and Ham are obviously examples of bad behavior in this passage, they are perfect examples of common behavior among sinners.
 - Romans 3:21, 28-32 – “21 For although they knew God, they **did not honor him as God or give thanks to him**, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened... 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of **unrighteousness**, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of **envy**, murder, strife, deceit, **maliciousness**. They are **gossips**, 30 **slanderers**, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents**, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only **do them** but give approval to those who practice them.”

◆ AND YET, GOD IS THE LORD (THE COVENANT-MAKING AND KEEPING GOD)!

- Noah proclaims a prophetic blessing upon Shem and Japheth, in which we find a shadow of the Gospel.
 - “**Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem...**” (v26) and “**May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem**” (v27).
 - The descendants of “Japheth” are the most numeric people-groups on the earth, and many understand this passage/prophecy to be a designation of the “Gentiles” generally.
 - The descendants of “Shem” are the Semitic people or Israelites/Jews.
 - The blessing is not upon Shem directly, but upon “the LORD” who is the God of Shem.
 - It is in relationship with the LORD that Shem (Israel) and Japheth (Gentiles) will enjoy “blessing.”

◆ GOD BLESSES AND SAVES FOR HIS GREAT NAME AND FOR HIS GLORY!

- God's Glory and His Name are His ultimate motivation for everything.
 - God saves sinners to demonstrate the "riches of His glory" (Rom. 9:23).
 - God "will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake" (1 Sam. 12:22).
 - God "restores my soul" and "leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps. 23:3).
 - God saves "for His name's sake" and to make His "mighty power" known (Ps 106:8).
 - God brings about "obedience and faith" from "among all the peoples" of the world "for the sake of His name" (Rom. 1:5).
 - God forgives sin "for His name's sake" (1 Jn. 2:12).
 - God, in Christ, unites Himself to His Bride – the Church – for His glory (Rev. 19:7).

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us where we shamefully delve into sin.
- May God make us gracious in our dealings with one another.
- May God move our hearts to worship as we consider His glorious power and blessings.

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