

Osaka International Church

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Series: Beginnings #15

Title: Focus on the Good

Scripture: Genesis 9:18-10:32

I. Introduction

Good morning! Last week we saw how Noah and his family were saved from the great flood because of Noah's faith. And we also learned from 2 Peter 2:5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and so we understand that Noah surely invited everyone into the ark. Yet because they did not believe, they refused the offer of salvation. In **Matthew 24:37**, Jesus warned His listeners. **"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."** Today, just like in Noah's time and in Jesus' time, many people assume that they can continue in sin with no fear of judgment. But the Bible tells us clearly that Jesus is coming again to judge the nations. At that time, everyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved, but those who refuse the offer of salvation will face judgment. Just as in the time of Noah, only one way of salvation is provided by God, the way of faith.



The story of Noah's ark is a comfort to believers, and a warning to those who do not believe. Today, we will also see that although Noah was a man of faith, Noah was not perfect. But even Noah's weaknesses can be a source of comfort for us, because by them Noah becomes an example of how God forgives the sins of believers. In today's passage, Noah sins in drunkenness and probably in other ways. But **Hebrews 11:7** remembers Noah as God sees him, as a man of faith. **"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."** There is no mention of Noah's mistakes, because God has forgiven him. Let's read Genesis 9:18-29.

II. Scripture Reading Genesis 9:18-29 (NIV)

[18] The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) [19] These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth. [20] Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. [21] When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. [22] Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. [23] But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.

[24] When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, [25] he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." [26] He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. [27] May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." [28] After the flood Noah lived 350 years. [29] Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died.

III. Teaching

After spending many years preaching to the people and building the ark, it seems that Noah was happy to return to the farming life that he had grown up with (Genesis 5:29). Noah built a vineyard and settled down to the seasonal rhythm of farm life. Years passed and grandchildren came and grew up. Life for Noah was probably very good and quite comfortable.



All the time that he was building the ark, Noah walked with God. But now Noah stumbles in the pleasures of a more peaceful life. Noah gets drunk and lays uncovered inside his tent. And, Noah's nakedness is probably an indirect way of referring to more serious sexual sin. In his later years, Noah, the man who walked with God, fell into sin, the sin of drunkenness and more. After a spiritual victory, there is often a counterattack from the devil. Noah's righteous walk with God during the long years of the building of the ark and the time of the flood was a great victory of faith. But as the years after the flood passed, something changed. Perhaps Noah said to himself, "I've done my part, now someone else should take a turn at preaching and setting the example." We don't know exactly. But somehow Noah left a hole open in his spiritual armor, and the devil's attack soon came. **Genesis 9:24-25** tells us, "When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.'"

Ham, Noah's youngest son, was the one who saw Noah naked and told his brothers. But Canaan, Ham's son, is the one who is cursed. We don't know why, we are not told the reason. But apparently, Canaan was somehow involved and guilty. Still, the curse of Canaan may be more of a prophecy than a condemnation. Just as the violence of Cain led him to establish a wicked city of violence, the sin of Ham and Canaan spread through their family. Throughout the Old Testament, we are told many times of the wickedness of Canaan's descendants. And in 1 Kings 9:20-21, and in other Scriptures, we learn how Noah's prophecy about the slavery of Canaan was fulfilled among Canaan's descendants in ancient Israel.

After the harsh word for Canaan, Noah continued and pronounced a special blessing for Shem through whose descendants the Messiah was to come, and Noah also prayed that God would extend the territory of Japheth. But let's back up and take a closer look at how Noah's sons responded to the sin of their father. In **Genesis 9:22**, we see that, "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside." Ham sees his father's sin and begins to spread the word. By telling his brothers, Ham dishonors his father and spreads gossip, making the problem bigger and worse instead of better.

Shem and Japheth set a better example for us. **Genesis 9:23**, "But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness." When these two brothers heard about their father's sin, they did what they could to make the situation better. They covered their father's nakedness. And as they were doing this, they were careful to turn their faces away, so that they would not add to their father's shame and their own by looking.

Now let's be honest with ourselves. What would we have done? If you had been there in front of the tent, would you have acted like Ham? Or like Shem and Japheth? When we are faced with a bad situation, we have a choice. We can choose to be part of the problem and make it worse than it was, or we can choose to be part of the solution. When we learn about someone's sin, do we go and tell others? If we do, then we are making the problem worse. Gossip further dishonors the person who has sinned, and in many cases we may ruin the reputation of all the people involved.



If you learn about a problem, don't reach for your cell phone to tell others. Instead, spend the time praying and working to make the situation better. If the person needs prayer, pray for them. If they need to be told that what they are doing is wrong, tell them. If they need help, then help them. Usually there is no need to spread the news to anyone else. When someone is in sin, usually the best response is to prayerfully cover the sin yourself. In extreme cases, when continued sin may cause harm to others, there may be a need to tell someone else and to ask for their help. But that is the exception, and I think the Lord will lead in those times.



Let's move on and take a brief look at chapter 10. Here, the attention of the author of Genesis shifts to the sons of Noah and their descendants. It is a genealogy, but it is more than that, it is a guide to the nations of the earth in ancient times, and so it is often called the Table of the Nations. The family tree of each of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth is given in some detail. In Genesis 10, all of these families are

probably still living together, but the author goes ahead and includes some comments about where the peoples descended from these families will go after the events at the tower of Babel in Chapter 11.

We won't look at the details, but it appears that after the languages are scrambled at the tower of Babel, many of Japheth's descendants moved north into Central Asia and Europe, while many of Ham's descendants moved south into Africa. The children of Shem, on the other hand, largely stay in the Middle Eastern region. But actually it is more complex, because some descendants of Ham and Japheth stay in the Middle East or go into Asia, and there is also a lot of mixing in the following years. Still today, many of the names of the nations in Genesis 10 can be identified with modern nations, cities, and people groups, but that does not necessarily mean these people are descendants of the people of the similar name in Genesis 10, because often nation and city names remain the same after wars and people movements have changed the makeup of the population.



Simplified: Shem in Middle East, Japheth North, Ham South



Actually, much more complex with lots of mixing

The most important thing to learn from the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 is that all human beings truly are brothers and sisters because we are all descended from the sons of Noah. The 72 families named in Genesis 10 represent the ancestors of every person and every nation. The Bible is truly a book of all peoples, because God loves all men and women. We can even see Jesus' concern for all nations expressed in **Luke 10:1**, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." Where was Jesus about to go? In the immediate context, the verse speaks of the towns and villages of that region which Jesus would soon visit. But in the sending of 72 disciples, I think we also see that Jesus is symbolically pointing to the 72 nations of Genesis 10. And certainly history shows that the disciples of Jesus have indeed gone into all of the world, and they have taken the Good News of Jesus to all nations. In fact, we are still continuing this great missionary task of spreading the Good News of Jesus today.



IV. Closing

Noah walked with God. But after the crisis of the flood was past, Noah seems to have let his guard down, and the day came when he fell into sin. This is a pattern that is seen far too often in the lives of Christian men and women. A person serves the Lord faithfully for years, but then they are tempted by the pleasures of the world. They stop serving in the church, saying, "I've done my part, now it is someone else's turn." They take a break from ministry, and then from church attendance, and later on even from Bible reading and prayer. The devil is delighted, because soon he will be able to tempt them with some worldly sin.

Many Christians start well, walking with the Lord in faith. But only a few finish well, completing the race of faith without stumbling. Far too many Christians fall along the way before they get to the finish line. Friends, brothers and sisters, this does not have to happen to us. We may not be perfect, but we can choose to stay in fellowship, to keep on serving the Lord, and to draw ever closer to the Lord instead of falling away. We can choose to continue year after year to focus on Jesus and His love and on all that is good and true and pure. **Philippians 4:8** urges us to do this very thing. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things."

Most of all, we need to focus on Jesus. For Jesus is perfect in truth, nobility, righteousness, purity, and loveliness; He is more excellent, more praiseworthy, and more admirable than anything in this world. In Jesus, all of the promises of God are made certain. Jesus came once to pay for our sins on the cross, and Jesus will come again to judge the world. Let us prepare our hearts for His coming. Let's pray.



V. Closing Prayer