

# An Unusual Curse

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[ 0 : 00 ] Genesis chapter 9, verses 18 to 29. Ham was the father of Canaan.

These three were the sons of Noah. And from these, the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

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. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, He also said, After the flood, Noah lived 350 years.

[ 2 : 18 ] All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. Thank you very much, Faye. I'm sure you've heard the saying that the more things change, they remain the same.

And I think those words can certainly be applied to the situation that we have just read about in the aftermath of the flood.

In these verses, we see a new chapter of the earth after the flood, looking very much like the old chapter of the earth before the flood.

And this similarity between the world after the flood, like the world before the flood, is sin.

The common denominator between these two worlds is sin. Noah, who just a few chapters earlier was described as a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and one who walked with God, is now drunk and passed out and lying naked in his tent.

[ 3 : 32 ] And when he finds out what his youngest son, Ham did to him by looking on his nakedness and trying to expose it to his brothers, Noah, in a rage of anger, curses his son's youngest son and blesses his son's brothers.

Brothers and sisters, as dark as this account is, the light of the gospel comes shining through.

And in our remaining time, I want us to consider how. So let's pray together. Father, we pause this morning and we thank you for your word that is enduring.

We thank you that you and your wisdom not only breathed it out, but you preserved it for your people over all the ages.

And Lord, we pray that your divine intent for this passage being in our Bibles would be made effective to all of our hearts as we hear it afresh this morning.

[ 4 : 51 ] Lord, we thank you for your providence that you have brought us here at this time this morning to hear your word.

Would you speak to all of us, Lord? Lord, I ask once again for your grace. I pray that you would enable me to faithfully proclaim your word to your people.

Lord, we pray, Lord, that through the preaching of your word you will transform hearts and lives and you will glorify your own name.

We pray and ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. This passage before us can be summarized by three particular activities that we see in it.

Three overarching activities that stand out in the midst of everything else that it says. And now remaining time, I want to consider each of these three activities and each of them can be referred to with just one word.

[ 5 : 58 ] The first activity is sinning. Again, sin is a surprising activity to encounter after the flood.

In light of the fact that the judgment of God came against sin and sinners, it is surprising to see that sin is so prominently featured and so graphically featured after the flood.

With eight persons on the earth who belonged to the same family, sin was still an issue. And last week we considered the reason for that.

The reason for that is that sinful hearts are a part of the human condition resulting from the fall and sinful hearts were not addressed by the flood.

Moses seems to make the point when he tells us in verses 18 and 19 that all the people of the earth dispersed from the earth.

[ 7 : 04 ] These ones who were in the ark, from Noah's three sons in particular, that everyone dispersed from them. And so what was in their genes is in the genes of everybody else who has inhabited the earth.

The same sin that infected them is the sin that infected every single person. The same human condition is what every single person faces.

So what caused Noah to get drunk and lie naked in his tent?

Some think it was an accident. Some think that Noah was just experimenting with wine and he really didn't know how potent it was. And so he took too much of it and he got drunk.

I don't think that's a reasonable explanation as to what happened to Noah. It's more reasonable to conclude that Noah did not set out to plant a huge vineyard without having some understanding, some knowledge about winemaking and the process involved.

[ 8 : 20 ] It seems that Noah, being this person who would set out to engage in this very specific and knowledgeable activity, he wasn't planting some grapes just to eat a few every now and then.

No, he was involved in something that he clearly understood. It is reasonable to conclude that Noah understood winemaking, how to ferment grape, and how to turn it into alcohol.

And so he planted a vineyard. But Noah drank to excess and Noah became drunk, so drunk that he stripped himself and laid naked in his tent.

And really, there's one reason underlying it, and that reason is sin. I believe it's fair to say that Noah's heart caused him to sin.

Noah's heart caused him to try to find gratification and joy in a gift of God than in God himself. Now, this passage is not about alcohol.

[ 9 : 45 ] This passage is about so much more than alcohol, but I think it's worth observing that the very first reference to alcohol in Scripture is not a positive one.

I think as we work through the book of Genesis, we'll see that the second reference is also not a positive one. And I think it's worth observing that anyone who consumes alcohol does face, to one degree or another, some risk of drinking too much and getting drunk.

But again, that's not the point of the passage. I share that out of pastoral concern. But in this passage, Noah is not the only one who is sinning.

We also see in this passage, Ham is sinning. We're told in verse 24 that Ham was the youngest son of Noah. Now, I want us to remember that these are not little children.

Noah is an old man. Ham is 600 or so years after the flood. And his sons would have been several hundred years old.

[ 11 : 17 ] You know, Shem, the oldest, was like 500 years after, two years after the flood. And so these are mature men. So although Ham is the youngest son, Ham is no little child.

Ham sought to expose his father's nakedness. What makes Ham's sin even more inexcusable is that although Noah was certainly wrong and sinful for being in the condition that he was, Noah was in private.

He was in the privacy of his tent. And Ham sought to make that a public matter by exposing Noah's private sin. But his brothers were respectful and they did not allow Ham to draw them into his sinful conduct and his disrespect of his father.

Now, assuming that Ham walked in unintentionally on his father and saw him in that state, he should have immediately covered him. And he should have mentioned it to no one.

That's the way we deal with the sins of other people that we become privy to, that's a private matter. We don't seek to broadcast it beyond the boundaries of it.

[ 12 : 38 ] But Ham didn't do that. He did the opposite of that. He left his father in that condition.

And he disgraced him further by broadcasting it to his brothers. So even though they didn't see it, he disgraced him by saying that he was in that condition. And they believed it because of the way we see them responding, ensuring that they did not look on their father's nakedness.

So that's the first permanent activity that we see in this passage. We see sinning, a surprising activity after the flood.

Noah getting drunk and lying past that and naked in his tent. His son Ham seeing him in that condition, trying to expose it to his brothers. Sin was a continuing reality after the flood.

Brothers and sisters, sin remains a continuing reality to this day. And it is a reminder that it takes more than disaster.

[13:51] It takes more than calamity to change the human heart. There are a lot of people who believe that if a disaster is perhaps severe enough, people will just change their ways and they will just turn.

But brothers and sisters, when we consider the devastation of the flood, if it could have changed any hearts, it would have changed the hearts of Noah and his sons.

But it didn't because it couldn't. We're told when Noah found out what Ham did, the way Noah responded brings us to the second prominent activity that we see in this passage, which is cursing. Look again at verses 24 and 25. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants, shall he be to his brothers. It's an understatement to say that Noah was angry. In Bahamian vernacular, Noah was hot. Noah was vexed. And Noah uttered, he was so angry, he uttered, The curse that he utters is a most unusual curse.

[15:16] And it's easy to miss it. It is so unusual that it's easy to miss it. Notice that Noah does not curse Ham.

What Noah does is so unusual that you just don't even, you just read over it. You think, well, he cursed, no, he didn't curse Ham. He cursed Ham's youngest son, Canaan. In Genesis 10, 6, we read of the four sons of Ham.

And Canaan is listed last. And generally speaking, when you see a son listed last, it means he's the youngest son. Not always, but that's generally the case. It's certainly so in this case.

Canaan was Ham's youngest son. So why does Noah curse Canaan when Ham is the one who sinned against him?

And then not only that, why does Noah curse Ham when, sorry, why does he curse Canaan when Ham had four sons?

[16:31] Why does he forget the other three and single out Canaan and curse him instead? It's the most unusual thing to do.

It's a perplexing question. And theologians are still giving various responses as to why Noah, in his anger, uttered this curse, not against the one who cursed, who shamed him, but against his youngest son.

And all sorts of reasons that are given. But it seems like the most natural reason that Noah did what he did is that Ham and Canaan were both youngest sons.

Ham was Noah's youngest son, and Canaan was Ham's youngest son. And so it seems that Noah was so angry with Ham, his youngest son, for what he did, that he decided to curse Ham's youngest son.

And he cursed him to be the lowest of slaves to his brothers. He said, you will be a slave of a slave to your brothers. Noah, no doubt, knew that getting drunk and laying passed out in your tent was wrong.

[18:01] He knew that was sin. But Noah's pride prevented him from acknowledging his sin, and he was more focused on Ham's sin.

And I think whenever we are refusing to be humble in the face of our own sin and to acknowledge our sin, our anger against those who sin against us is magnified.

But when we, despite the fact that we have been sinned against, when we humble ourselves and acknowledge our own sin, we tend to be more merciful with those who sin against us. But in Noah, we see no humility, we see no repentance, we only see anger, and he curses, not Ham, but Ham's youngest son.

You know, one of the things I've come to see, people are really no different, no matter who they are. No matter who they are.

We're all the same down to our core. And Ham being a typical parent, I'm sure that this was a very painful thing for Ham, that his father would curse his youngest son, Canaan.

[ 19 : 31 ] I think you would agree with me that any parent, any right-thinking parent, will generally want to stand in the place of their child to experience anything that's painful or difficult.

They will do whatever they can to spare their children from any kind of hardship or difficulty that may come their way. I mean, we have heard parents say, I wish it were me.

The most tragic thing that can happen to a child and a parent will say, I wish that were me. And it's especially true when something a parent has done is going to negatively affect a child.

I think it is painful for any parent to stand and see something that they have done negatively affect their child.

And so I can only imagine the grief that Noah's curse on Canaan brought to Ham's heart. He probably cried out to his father and said, Why?

[ 20 : 46 ] Why have you cursed him? He did you nothing. I'm the one who hurt you. I'm the one who shamed you. Why did you curse him? And it is an unusual curse.

Based on the facts, it's fair to say that Noah uttered this curse against Cain in a most unusual way. And it rightly should grab our attention. But you know what? Noah's cursing of his grandson is not the most unusual curse that we find in Scripture.

The most unusual curse that we find in Scripture is God cursing his own son. And he didn't curse him with mere words.

Christ was indeed cursed. He was not just in word cursed. He was indeed cursed. The Bible says he became a curse for us.

[ 21 : 58 ] Listen to what it says in Galatians 3.13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

Christ became a curse for us. How? God made him a curse for us by the death of crucifixion, which he died. And in Jewish culture, anyone who died in that way was hung on a tree or on a cross was a curse.

And Christ was cursed not because he deserved to be cursed. He was cursed because he was our substitute. And brothers and sisters, in Noah's cursing of Canaan instead of Ham, we see a picture of God cursing his son in our place.

He treated Christ on the cross exactly the way we deserved to be treated. Noah's anger was an unholy anger and it was unjust because in his anger he ignored his own sin.

In his anger, he demonstrated that he was unholy. But God's anger was holy and just. God's anger was holy and just anger at sin and towards sinners like you and me.

[ 23 : 34 ] And anger at sin is God's right and holy and just response to sin. He can do no other than respond to sin in that way.

And he didn't fly off the handle as Noah did in a rage and in anger that was sinful. Now, God's anger at sin is the holy just response to sin.

And he poured it all out on Jesus Christ. Noah cursed Canaan because he was angry at Ham and he wanted to hurt Ham.

He wanted to bring the pain to his heart that will come to the heart of any parent. But that's not why God cursed his son.

God cursed his son because he wanted to bless us. He wanted to redeem us from the curse of the law that we were under. Noah's cursing did not benefit Ham but God's cursing of his son benefited us.

[ 24 : 43 ] and God's judgment on Christ was mixed with mercy and grace for us and he did it because of his sovereign electing grace which he placed upon us.

And in Christ we see the innocent suffering for the guilty the perfectly innocent suffering for the perfectly guilty but not so with Canaan. Although Canaan didn't deserve Noah's curse Canaan was a sinner he wasn't perfectly righteous and we could write off what happened to Canaan as the effects of being a sinner living in a sinful and in a broken world where sometimes the deeds of the parents do affect the children.

But again brothers and sisters in this unusual curse that was uttered against Canaan we see this picture of Christ being punished for us instead.

And for us that's good news. For us Christ has been punished as our substitute. And again if we find it unusual that Canaan was cursed instead of Ham brothers and sisters it should be light years more unusual that Jesus Christ was cursed in our place instead of us.

If it raises questions regarding Canaan it should raise many more questions regarding Christ being a curse for us.

[ 26 : 43 ] When Jesus went to the cross he took the place of sinners he took the place of all those who would ever believe and he suffered punishment on their behalf.

God punished Christ in the place of sinners as their substitute. And this means that the only wrath that is left to be poured out against sin and against sinners is wrath that has not been poured out against Jesus Christ.

And that's important to understand. So remember sin is going to be punished in one of two places. Sin will be punished on the back of Jesus Christ as sin has been punished or sin will be punished on the back of sinners in hell. And there are those who say well Jesus did that for every person. Jesus went to the cross and he took the punishment for the whole world. Well if he did then the whole world has had its punishment absorbed in Christ their sins atoned for by Christ.

[ 27 : 58 ] But the Bible tells us that there will be people in hell. And Jesus took the place of sinners. He took the place of actual real sinners and he absorbed God's wrath for them.

And so for them there is no more punishment to be poured out. And I wonder if you're aware of this this morning.

I wonder if you're aware sometimes we sing the song Jesus paid it all and the truth of that is not really coming into our hearts. The truth of that is really not coming up to the last floor of our minds. And it says he paid it all. He paid it all brothers and sisters. Jesus paid for our sins past present and future sins.

sins. He's absorbed it all. He's paid the price in full. He didn't pay some of it. He paid all of it. And I think for some people it's hard.

[ 29 : 16 ] Some believers it's hard for them to grasp the reality that Jesus Christ has already paid for sins that they have not committed yet. But if you struggle with that the question must be this.

Who then will pay for it? If the sins that you have not committed yet as a believer have not been paid for who will pay for it?

Christ has already gone to the cross. He's already borne punishment for sin. Who then will pay for it? Christ has absorbed it all.

He has paid the price for sin for all those who put their trust in him for all those whom God before the foundation of the world elected to be his people.

He took their place. He stood in their stead. He didn't pay some of it.

[ 30 : 31 ] He paid all of it. I'm aware that for some people they hear this and they think well boy if that's the case then I could just sin and do whatever I want live however I want if Jesus has already paid it all and he's covered my sins in the future and everything is paid for.

If that thought comes to your mind I want you to hear these words from the Apostle Paul in Romans 6 1-2 he writes what should we say then he was making a similar point about the grace of God that abounds much more than when sin abounds he says what should we say then are we to continue in sin that grace may abound by no means how can we who died to sin still live in it brothers and sisters if we've died to sin if Christ is our savior then sin has no attraction to us to cause us to want to go and continue to live in that way and abuse the grace of God Paul says God forbid that we should live in that way brothers and sisters instead of being in any way tempted or enticed to run out and sin because of the abounding grace of

God that has come to us our response should be to fall on our faces and to worship our gracious and good God for mercy that we don't deserve being mindful that we should have paid the full price of our sin but he poured it on Christ he put it on Christ instead of us and so in this passage we see the activities of sinning and cursing and so and finally we see the activity of blessing we're told in verse 23 that when Shem and Japheth we're told what they did when Ham told them about their father lying naked in the tent look at what it says in verse 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 Shem and Japheth did the right thing they honored their father and in response rather than curse them their father blesses them we see this in verses 26 and 27 how Noah blesses his son Shem and Japheth stating in each case that Canaan would be their servant and what is clear is that Noah's words go beyond just these three boys these three men it's clear that his words go to their offspring as well he has their offspring in mind he has in mind that all of Canaan's offspring would

be subservient to Shem and Japheth and why does Noah bless Shem and Japheth he blesses them out of anger he blesses them out of anger against Ham to hurt Ham by cursing Ham's youngest son listen to the words of Galatians 3 13 and 14 we read 13 earlier listen to 13 and 14 together Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us as it is written cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith again we see this dim similarity between the blessing coming to Shem and Japheth because of the curse on Canaan and the blessing of Abraham coming upon us because of the curse that Christ bore!

[ 35 : 19 ] Let me close with two closing thoughts the first is about the first is about the grace of God if you were to write the last word on Noah what would you say about him this is the last word on Noah without apart from his name being mentioned once or twice after this but in the Old Testament this is the last word on Noah this is the account that we have about Noah the last thing we have recorded in scripture that he did got drunk laid in his tent naked when he was discovered rather than admit his sin and confess his sin in rage he curses his son's son what would be your last word on Noah well the truth is that

Noah despite all of this dark sin still belonged to God his position in God sight was the same he was righteous not by any works that he had done but by grace through faith in God and that's why we find these words about Noah in Hebrews 11 7 this is what it says this is the last word on Noah doesn't resurrect this says about Noah by faith being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household by this he was condemned by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith brothers and sisters what is true about us in

God's sight on our best day remains true about us in God's sight on our worst day and why why is it that in God's sight there is no difference in the way he sees us on our worst day from our best day because how God sees us is not rooted in what we do or what we don't do as those who belong to Christ how God sees us is rooted in Christ and who he is and what he has done for his people we the Bible says who belong to Christ are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ and it's all because Jesus bore our sins that we might bear his righteousness not in and of ourselves not any kind of inherent righteousness but a credited righteousness a foreign righteousness an alien righteousness that God has credited to us on Christ's behalf and we are righteous in God's sight even in our sin in the same way that Noah was righteous in God's sight we are righteous by faith you consider

Shem and Japheth and the fact that Noah in part blessed them as a reward he blessed them for what they did in not dishonoring him and walking backward and covering him he blessed them in part as a reward but we have no reward those of us who have trusted in Christ we have no reward or no reason that God would bless us the only reward that we are blessed through is Christ's reward and that's why when we sing how deep the father's love for us we rightly ask the question why should I gain from his reward I cannot give an answer but this I know with all my heart his wounds have paid my ransom brothers and sisters Noah in all of his sin still found grace in the eyes of the

Lord and thank God grace is like that thank God that grace is not a circumstantial grace thank God that Noah who found grace before the flood didn't lose grace after the flood and it was a God who wasn't surprised by what Noah did after the flood he knew it all and Noah was still declared as one who was blameless one who was righteous in his generation and the one thing we must conclude from it is he couldn't have been righteous for himself Noah displays everything to refute that idea that he had some righteousness within himself he had none and it's on graphic display in chapter 9 the righteousness that he had was credited to him by the grace of God and brothers and sisters the same is true with us

[ 41 : 13 ] God's love never leaves us if we belong to him his grace is an enduring grace even in our greatest failures and we need to hear this this morning if we don't hear this to the core of our hearts the devil will beat us and he will destroy us and we can imagine what he must have been saying in Noah's mind you're the one who God is going to now make this covenant with you're the new man and look at you but Noah was still righteous in God's sight the second concluding thought the first one is about God's grace this one is about God's sovereignty as we consider this passage we should not lose sight of God's sovereignty in the midst of all that's happening in this account after

the flood

God was still working out his sovereign purposes the promise that he gave in Genesis 3:15 it didn't go away the promise that he made in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would one day crush the head of the serpent he didn't just discard that the whole idea of preserving this remnant of people and not letting everyone be destroyed in the flood was that God was going to bring his promise to pass through that group of people not through all of them but out of that group you knew in the midst of that group God is going to bring his promise to pass that the seed of the woman is going to crush the head of the serpent all of that was still very much in effect the flood did not nullify it and not only was the means for the seed of the woman in the midst of those eight persons who remained after the flood so was the seed of the serpent and in the midst of human choices God was working out his purposes and what we see is this pattern between Adam and Noah we see in Adam Adam had three sons two were righteous Abel and Seth and one was wicked Cain and Noah has three sons two were righteous Shem and Japheth one was wicked Ham!

we see in verse 26 that technically Noah does not bless Shem technically he blesses the God of Shem he blesses the Lord he says blessed be the Lord the God of Shem and it points to Shem's godliness it points to the fact that Noah was able to recognize that Shem's God was the Lord Shem's God was Yahweh and Shem responded as he did and it would be Shem through whom the continuation of the seed that would crush the head of the serpent would come and it's clear that Ham followed the line of Cain and was in the line of the seed of the serpent and so was Canaan Canaan would have been an old man at the time that his grandfather cursed him the Canaanites were the people of Canaan and they were so wicked they were so wicked that God was expelling them out of the land the land that he was giving to the children of Israel God was expelling them out of it and Moses is writing this account to the children of Israel as they are preparing to come out of Egypt to go into the promised land Moses is making the argument he's making the case to help them to see what God is doing and he's recounting this history for them he's telling them God is bringing you into the land of Canaan because the Canaanites the land is vomiting them out the land is expelling them because of their wickedness and

[ 46 : 16 ] Moses is giving all of this historical background to make the case to support what God is doing again brothers and sisters there's much in this passage that could distract us but let us not be so distracted that we miss the grace of God and we miss the sovereignty of God that's highlighted throughout this passage let's pray oh father we thank you once again for your grace that has come to us through Jesus Christ but thank you that we who deserved nothing but judgment and wrath have received mercy and grace thank you that we who like Ham deserve to be cursed were not cursed and instead you cursed your son and

Lord you cursed him that we might be blessed and the blessings of Abraham the blessings of salvation might come to us well I pray this morning if there would be those who are languishing under a burden of guilt those who are thinking that you're seeing them differently because the present circumstances Lord would you remind them and assure them that your grace is an enduring grace it is an informed grace it is a grace that is comprehensive Lord do your work in the hearts of all your people we pray in Jesus name Amen come behold the wondrous mystery come behold the wondrous mystery in the dawning of the king he the theme of heaven's praises robed in brave humanity in our longing in our darkness now the light of life has come though to

Christ to condescended took on flesh to ransom us verse two come behold the wondrous mystery he the perfect son of man in his living in his suffering never trace no stain of sin see the true and better Adam come to save the help our man Christ the great and sure fulfillment of the Lord in him we stand verse three come behold the wondrous mystery

Christ the Lord upon the tree in the stead of ruined sinners hangs the lamb in victory see the price of our redemption see the father's plan unfold bringing many sons to glory grace unmeasured love untold verse four come behold the wondrous mystery come behold the wondrous mystery slain by death the God of life but no grave could ever restrain him praise the Lord he is alive what a foretaste of deliverance how unwavering our hope

Christ in power resurrected as he will be what a forte of deliverance what a forte of deliverance how unwavering our hope Christ in power resurrected as we will be when he comes oh Lord what a foretaste of deliverance that you have given to us in the gospel Lord may that be our hope may we hope in that and not in ourselves may we hope in

[ 52 : 04 ] Christ and Christ alone may we rest in him may we trust in him all of our days and may we plead his atoning sacrifice on behalf of undeserving sinners like us may we with conviction recognize that he took our place he absorbed the wrath that we deserved so that we might receive his righteousness oh father I pray that you would cause those of us who have put our trust in Christ to leave rejoicing today knowing that our sins have been covered our sins have been atoned for knowing that we have peace with God we've been reconciled to the father that I pray for those who do not know

Christ today and I pray oh Lord that you would convict them of their sin I pray that you would convict them of righteousness and the judgment to come and I pray that you would cause them to see their need for a savior Lord I pray that you would have mercy on them open their eyes transform their lives grant faith and repentance in Jesus Christ and may they find rest for their weary souls pray in Christ's name and now as we leave today may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all amen amen you're dismissed if you need prayer as the others are dismissed please come