

*Faith & Forgiveness*

Most people have heard of Billy Graham. He spent his life traveling around the world holding meetings, introducing people to Jesus Christ. He was a spiritual adviser to multiple U.S. presidents and was number seven on Gallup's list of most admired people for the 20th century.

Today Billy Graham is 89 years old and is in failing health. But there's no doubt that Billy Graham kept his focus on the goal. He finished well.

Graham started out as an evangelist with Youth for Christ. There were two other young men at that time who also preached under the YFC banner. One was Chuck Templeton and the other was Bron Clifford.

All three of these young men rose to prominence in their middle twenties. One seminary president after hearing Chuck Templeton called him the most gifted, talented young preacher in America.

Many believed that Clifford was the most powerful preacher to come up in the church for centuries. People lined up for hours to hear Him preach. At the the age of twenty-five, Clifford touched more lives, influenced more leaders, and set more attendance records than other pastor in American history.

By 1950 Templeton had left the ministry. He pursued a radio career. He became an announcer and a newscaster, telling the world that he no longer believed Jesus Christ was the son of God.

By 1954 Clifford had lost his family, ministry and health. This once famous preacher died of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of thirty-five in a rundown hotel on the edge on Amarillo. Texas.

In 1945 all three of these young men with extraordinary gifts were preaching for the purpose of multiplying the church by thousands of people. But within ten years only one of them was still on track for God.

In God's kingdom it's not how you start that's most important. It's how you finish that counts.

## **Open your Bible to Genesis 9**

If anybody stands out in the Bible as a man of God to be admired and emulated, it's Noah. Noah's called a righteous man who walked with God. Noah's called a man of faith. Noah is a man described as willing to pay the price of commitment.

I've enjoyed studying these chapters about Noah and the flood because they have given me such a clear picture of a man who was upright and just and godly. Now the flood is past and God has commanded Noah and his sons to repopulate the earth. God blessed them and established His covenant with them.

So, Noah has seen first hand the hatred that God has for sin. He's experienced the wrath of God but he also experienced the salvation of God in the ark.

And we would think if anybody was going to finish well it would be be Noah. And yet just to let us know that we all have a sin nature and that every one of us is vulnerable, God exposes a dark side of Noah's life.

The Bible doesn't pull any punches. It shows God followers exactly as they are. We get to see the good, the bad, and the ugly.

*I. No One Is Immune From Stumbling*

### **Chapter 9 Read 20-21**

Noah and his family, according to ancient tradition, lived for years after the flood on the lower slopes on the northern side of Mt. Araat. Although Noah lived for 300 years after the flood, he never had any other sons. Shem, Ham and Japeth lived near him and soon began to raise families of their own.

Outside of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden there hasn't been anybody in history who had more going for them than Noah and his sons and their wives.

And yet even though the flood had destroyed sinful people, it hadn't destroyed sin. Even though God's judgment put an end to Satan's working in the pre-flood world it hadn't put an end to Satan.

These events take place a while after the flood. Noah's youngest son Ham already

had children and even Ham's youngest son Canaan, has been born. Several decades have passed.

Things seem to be going along smoothly. Noah has taken up farming and part of what he grew was grapes. Growing grapes can lead to making wine, making wine always leads to drinking it, and that's what Noah did.

Unfortunately, Noah didn't just take a little wine for medicinal purposes. He got drunk.

And what a message that ought to be to us. Noah who stood his ground when the pressure was on and lived righteously before a wicked, godless world, bit the dust in a time of peace and prosperity.

When the temptations to sin were hot and heavy Noah resisted. When godlessness pressed in on him from every side Noah stood strong. When others openly sinned Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

When God came to him and said, "build an ark" Noah obeyed without question. By faith he spent 1/6 of his life following out a command of God to build a gigantic boat when he had never even seen a flood before. He met every obedience and faith test along the way.

Now the pressure is gone. Noah is older and more seasoned in his faith. He is in the midst of the blessings of God. He's free from the oppressive sin of others. He's living in prosperity and enjoying his grandchildren and he falls into sin. Why?

The Bible says, *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* I Corinthians 10:12 The most dangerous aspect of sin isn't its open ugliness, but its quiet deceptiveness.

The most powerful tactic of Satan isn't to hit us with an outright obvious temptation to sin, it's to get us when our guard is down.

And here's Noah falling victim to a comparatively simple temptation. There is a lot of difference between not getting drunk and the temptation to disobey God and give up on such a monumental project as building the ark.

But now no one was around to laugh and to mock. There was no ready comparison of godliness with ungodliness. And so in Noah's mind the need to watch and pray might not have seemed so pressing. What is wrong with a little relaxation?

And Satan got a foothold and Noah got drunk. Now the way we know this wasn't a little night cap on Noah's part is because verse 21 uses the Hebrew word *shakar* which clearly means "to be drunk." And then we are told in the same verse that he was uncovered with his tent.

Now that doesn't mean he kicked his covers off his bed while he was sleeping. It means he disrobed. The NKJV translates this verb as a passive, but actually it is a hithpail stem in Hebrew, which is reflexive – it's like a middle voice, and a better translation would be "he uncovered himself."

Noah in a state of drunkenness threw off his robe-like garment and was naked in his tent.

Arthur Pink in his book "Gleanings in Genesis" lists 3 lessons we can learn from Noah's sin.

#1. The fact that its talked about here is a strong proof for the inspiration of scripture.

He writes, To err is human, but it is also human to conceal the blemishes of those we admire. Had the Bible been a human production, had it been written by uninspired historians, the defects of its leading characters would have been ignored or if recorded at all, an attempt at extenuation would have been made (in other words an excuse would have been given). Had some human admirer chronicled the history of Noah, his awful fall would have been omitted. The fact that it is recorded and that no effort is made to excuse his sin, is evidence that the characters of the Bible are painted in colors of truth and nature, that such characters are not sketched by human pens, that Moses and the other historians must have written by divine inspiration.

#2. A second thing that becomes obvious is that man at his best is an righteous failure. Genesis 9 deals with the beginning of a new dispensation. A new way that God uses to deal with human beings and to test their faithfulness. Just like the others, it shows humanities' failure. He was placed in an environment, which the hand of God's judgment has swept clean, in which the blessing of God has been pronounced, in which human government has been instituted and Noah can't even govern himself. In each of the dispensations – innocence, conscience, human government, praise, law

and grace people are given a chance to prove themselves. But we fail because we're sinners. And each time we are pointed back to God's grace and forgiveness.

#3. And then a 3rd thing that's pointed out as kind of a sidelight is don't play around with alcohol cause it's dangerous.

Isn't it interesting that the first time wine is mentioned in the Bible it is in association with drunkenness, shame and a curse.

It seems that I find more and more Christians taking the attitude that because the Bible doesn't say that all drinking of alcohol is sin then there is no harm in a couple of beers or a little wine.

If nothing else stands out in this study of Noah, I hope you at least see the danger of playing around with potentially sinful situations.

Believe me, every person who works with the Baltimore rescue mission will tell you the same thing. There are men in every mission, in every big city in this country who are saved, and who know the Bible who lost their families, their jobs, houses and their self-respect and ended up as bums in the gutter because of alcohol and you know what? None of them thought it would happen to them. So Noah fell – just as all of us can fall.

And given our sure drift and bent toward sin we need to make sure we don't let down our guard. That we walk in the power and the grace of God, and never think that somehow, either because of our own spiritual growth or the ease of our situation that we can somehow get along on our own strength.

But then there's more to the story of Noah's sin.

*I. No One Is Immune From Stumbling*

*II. Our Sin Often Impacts Those Around Us*

**Read 22 – 24**

As Noah lay sleeping on his couch, his robe cast aside on the floor, Ham entered his tent.

Noah apparently thought he was alone while he was savoring his wine he had made, and didn't expect to see anyone else that day. If he had been anticipating a visit he probably would have been more careful. But isn't it strange that we're often more careful before other people than before God. Noah wasn't careful and Satan seized this rare opportunity.

He implanted within Ham's mind the desire to call unexpectedly on his father at that particular time.

As Ham entered that tent, he was surprised to see his father lying there naked and in a drunken sleep. But he did more than see him. The word "saw" here actually means "gazed with satisfaction!"

Now we'd be here all day if we listed every idea that commentators have put out there to try and explain just what went on in that tent.

Some have interpreted this account as Ham experiencing homosexual lust and perhaps even a homosexual act on his father because verse 24 says *what his younger son had done unto him*.

The Jewish talmud records that one Rabbi taught that Ham castrated his father so that he could seize the power to populate the earth.

Still another interpretation says that "saw the nakedness of his father" is the same as the phrase "to uncover the nakedness of his father" which is found in Leviticus 18 and means to have sexual relations with your father's wife. One interpretation has postulated that Ham had an incestuous relationship with his own mother and that Canaan is cursed by Noah later on because he was the product of that union.

Really all the text says is that Noah uncovered himself and Ham gazed upon his nakedness. There is no evidence that Ham did anything else.

This doesn't mean though that Ham merely stumbled in in an accidental way and saw his father's nakedness and ran out. There wouldn't be any blame in that.

More likely his sin was in the way he reacted to his discovery.

He could have covered his father like his two brothers did, but instead he went and told them.

And the word for “told” here is very similar to the word for “saw.” Just as Ham didn’t merely see but he gazed with satisfaction upon his father’s nakedness he didn’t merely tell but he told with delight.

Apparently he made fun of his fathers drunken and uncovered state. This was an attack on his father’s honor.

Robert Chandlish, one of the older commentators, says it seems to him that this was more than disrespect for his father. This was Ham expressing disrespect for his Father’s religion.

There was a carnal and rebellious bent to Ham’s nature but it had always been kept in check by his godly father.

He was always under the pressure of living in the home of a preacher of righteousness.

But finally he’d seen a crack in the wall. The old man does have a few skeletons in the closet himself. And seeing his godly father in sin made him feel a little less guilty about his own sinful nature.

And so he ran off gleeful and impatient to tell the news. Obviously this wasn’t something he did to his father, this was something his father had done himself.

And so Ham was very much like a lot of other people who seem to rejoice when a godly person falls into sin.

You let a well known Christian do anything that is even slightly questionable and it immediately makes all the wire services. That’s big news. The ungodly rejoice when the godly fall.

And I’ve even seen that happen among Christians. I knew a man that was very influential as a Christian. He had a very large ministry but a lot of people didn’t agree with all of his theology and one day he fell into a very serious sin.

And instead of other believers weeping and anguishing over what had happened to this brother, their attitude was almost joy that it happened. To them it seemed to prove that they were right and he was wrong.

That should never be.

Well here is Ham running to get his brothers to let them in on this juicy tidbit. Apparently hoping to gain some sympathy with them. But Shem and Japeth reacted quite differently than Ham.

They did rush to Noah's tent, but not to enjoy his weakness and shame. Instead, they refused to even look at their father. They grieved for their father and did what they could to remove the indignity.

And so they walked in backwards and covered their father with an garment.

I don't think there would have been any sin in them seeing him in that state, I think they did what they did

1. Out of respect.
2. To show Ham how strongly they felt about his attitude.

Well, eventually Noah awoke from his wine, and that means he awoke from his wine stupor. He noticed the robe that had been placed over him.

It might not have even been his garment since his sons apparently picked it up outside of the area in which he was. But obviously someone had placed it there and whether it was his or not, it wasn't on him in the same fashion as if he had merely lain on the couch fully clothed to take a nap.

He must have asked, first from his wife (if Mrs. Noah was still living) and then from his sons until he learned what had really happened.

As ashamed as Noah was of his own moral lapse, he realized that the sin of Ham was even more serious. It wasn't a matter of being overtaken in a fault, it was based on a heart of rebellion and unbelief – not only against his father but also against his father's God.

On the other hand the actions of Shem and Japeth plainly testified of both their respect for their father and their own reverence for God.

According to some people's theology Noah would have lost his salvation when he became drunk. But Noah was a child of God. And even though he was physically naked he was still covered with the robe of God's righteousness.



And God was about to use Noah again.

What a testimony to the grace of God. Donald Grey Barnhouse writes:

Just as Jonah was given an important task to do after he flight and folly, so Noah is given a new opportunity to be a mouthpiece for God. The circumstances of his sin are made the framework of the prophecy which God speaks through him.

To some extent what Noah is about to say was no doubt based on the insight he has gained into the character of his sons.

Knowing them and their children gave him some idea of where they were headed. You couple that with the Holy Spirit's working and this is what we find.

First there's the curse on Canaan. **Read verse 25**

If what went on in the tent has generated a lot of interpretations, this part has brought about even more.

In fact in the middle of the 19th century there was this idea that many of Ham's descendants were black Africans, so they justified slavery on the basis of Ham's sin and this prophecy of servitude.

Most of the time interpreting the Bible isn't that hard. Just read it for what it says. Notice. Noah doesn't curse Ham, he curses Canaan, Ham's youngest son.

And rather than this being a curse that some how Noah gave out in anger and God backs up, it was really more a prophecy of what was to come.

Canaan is the 4th son of Ham and roughly represents one quarter of the Hamitic race. The rest of Ham's descendants don't even come under consideration for cursing or blessing.

Now the descendants of Canaan are the Canaanites. They became races cursed because of their moral impurity and their sin. Over and over again God condemns their wickedness.

Later on when God's people were given the law of God the scriptures against incest, child sacrifice, bestiality were all warnings to Israel not to do what the Canaanites were doing.

In Abraham's day God said the iniquity of the Ammorites was almost full. The Ammorites were a Canaanite people. By the time Joshua led Israel into Canaan the Canaanites were ripe for divine judgment.

Sodom has left its name for the unnatural practices that went on there. The Phoenicians and the colony of Carthage shocked the Romans by the depth of their depravity. And let me tell you if you could shock the Romans you were really off the deep end.

Truly cursed was Canaan. Noah's prophecy was accurate. The Canaanites, what was left of them, became servants to Israel and the prophecy was fulfilled. Today there are no Canaanites.

But now Noah also prophesied over Shem and Japeth.

And while he limited the curse to one quarter of Ham's descendants (and apparently Canaan was the most prone to following in his father's footsteps) his blessing covered all of Shem and Japeth's descendants.

*I. No One Is Immune From Stumbling*

*II. Our Sin Often Impacts Those Around Us*

*III. Even Our Failures Can Not Hinder The Plan Of God*

### **Read Verse 26 & 27**

*Blessed be Yaweh God of Shem.*

This is a great blessing because it is a new step in the Old Testaments unfolding of Messianic prophecy.

Remember the prophecy of a coming Messiah back in Genesis 3:15? There we were told that the seed of the woman would crush the serpents' head. A human being would come one day who would put an end to Satan's rule.

It is evident as the story of Genesis unfolds that he would come from the line of Seth rather than the ungodly line of Cain.

Now in a prophecy made following the flood, the line of decent is narrowed again.

Out of Noah's 3 sons it will be the Shemitic (or Semitic people's as we call them) whose God will be Jehovah and who will father the Messiah.

In fact, the rest of the book of Genesis is going to tell us in detail the story of the descendents of Shem, the Semitic people, the Jews. That's why we label anyone who is against the Jews as anti-Semitic.

In time the promise is narrowed still further to the house of David and to his descendants:

Joseph is in the line of David's son Solomon and Mary is in the line of David's son Nathan.

The prophecy of blessing in Genesis is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Finally, there is a prophecy for Japeth and his family. Two things are said of Japeth. First, God will extend his territory. (The name Japeth means enlarge, so this is a play on words).

Second Japeth will dwell in the tents of Shem.

This doesn't mean that the descendants of Japeth will take over Shem's territory but I believe it means they will enter into his spiritual blessing through association with the Semitic people.

The descendants of Japeth have established the great nations of the Western world. Greeks. Romans, Europeans, many Americans are all descendants of Japeth.

And truly we've been blessed. But our blessing doesn't come from our extensive territory, our wealth, our power or influence.

Our blessing comes from our relationship with Jehovah the God of Shem, and our faith in Jesus Christ whose going to come again and sit on his father's throne in Jerusalem and rule and reign forever.

Is it possible for any of us to commit any sin in the book? Yes, it is.

And the story of Noah ought to stand as a warning to watch and pray that we don't fall to temptation.

But this story of Noah is also a story of forgiveness and grace. It's a story of God's mercy and God's faithfulness to his promises.

Do you know the God of Shem today? He's blessed forever because He loves us and gave His only begotten Son as our sin bearer. He was faithful to his people and he's faithful to us.